

# RETHINKING TRANSLATION

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Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology

Edited by  
Lawrence Venuti

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TRANSLATION



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Volume 2

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LAWRENCE VENUTI

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Lawrence Venuti, ed., *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology*

## Errata

p. 156: reads: 'hegemonic linguistic-cultural object': should read: 'foreign text'

p. 156: reads: 'dominated language-culture': should read: 'target language'

p. 194: reads: **Edmond Glissant** should read: **Édouard Glissant**

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For Michael and Lucille Venuti

*se ti togliamo ciò che non è tuo  
non ti rimane niente*



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# CONTENTS

<i>Notes on contributors</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
<i>Introduction</i>	1
Lawrence Venuti	
1 TRANSLATING ORIGINS: PSYCHOANALYSIS AND PHILOSOPHY	18
<i>Andrew Benjamin</i>	
2 TRANSLATION AS SIMULACRUM	42
<i>John Johnston</i>	
3 GENDER AND THE METAPHORICS OF TRANSLATION	57
<i>Lori Chamberlain</i>	
4 TRANSLATION AS (SUB)VERSION: ON TRANSLATING <i>INFANTE'S INFERNO</i>	75
<i>Suzanne Jill Levine</i>	
5 MERRILL'S VALÉRY: AN EROTICS OF TRANSLATION	86
<i>Jeffrey Mehlman</i>	
6 MISTRANSLATION, MISSED TRANSLATION: HÉLÈNE CIXOUS' <i>VIVRE L'ORANGE</i>	106
<i>Sharon Willis</i>	
7 TRANSLATION AND THE POSTCOLONIAL EXPERIENCE: THE FRANCOPHONE NORTH AFRICAN TEXT	120
<i>Samia Mehrez</i>	
8 TRANSLATION AND CULTURAL HEGEMONY: THE CASE OF FRENCH-ARABIC TRANSLATION	139
<i>Richard Jacquemond</i>	



## CONTENTS

9	THE LANGUAGE OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE: FIGURES OF ALTERITY IN CANADIAN TRANSLATION	159
	<i>Sherry Simon</i>	
10	COLORS IN TRANSLATION: BAUDELAIRE AND RIMBAUD	177
	<i>Tom Conley</i>	
11	I. U. TARCHETTI'S POLITICS OF TRANSLATION; OR, A PLAGIARISM OF MARY SHELLEY	196
	<i>Lawrence Venuti</i>	
	<i>Index</i>	231

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# INTRODUCTION

*Lawrence Venuti*

The translator is a writer whose singular originality lies in the fact that he seems to make no claim to any.

(Maurice Blanchot, 'Translating,' trans. Richard Sieburth)

Translation continues to be an invisible practice, everywhere around us, inescapably present, but rarely acknowledged, almost never figured into discussions of the translations we all inevitably read. This eclipse of the translator's labor, of the very act of translation and its decisive mediation of foreign writing, is the site of multiple determinations and effects – linguistic, cultural, institutional, political. But it must first be noted that translators themselves are among the agents of their shadowy existence. To be a 'leading' translator today is to produce translations that are highly accomplished, favorably reviewed, and award-winning, but it also means sheer quantity, executing numerous projects, practicing translation as a steady if meager source of income, gaining an economic advantage over other translators in the competition for foreign texts and the negotiation of fees. The goal for many translators is to work from contract to contract and move from one foreign text to another, focussing on the delivery of the manuscript and therefore devoting little time to sustained methodological reflection. Appropriately, translators speaking or writing about translation are often represented as taking time off from their special 'art' or 'craft,' constituting 'voices from the field,' giving readers 'the opportunity to look over [their] shoulders.'<sup>1</sup> Translators are always hard at work, but they are producing translations, not translation commentary, criticism, or theory; they appear as aesthetically sensitive amateurs or talented craftsmen, but not critically self-conscious writers who develop an acute awareness of the cultural and social conditions of their work. The contemporary translator is a paradoxical hybrid, at once dilettante and artisan.

It is unfortunate that this is a prevalent representation, and more unfortunate still that many translators choose to live it out, since it will not help to make their activity more visible to readers: not only does it

perpetuate the dubious idea that translation is foremost a practical activity, distinct from theorization, from reflection on the cultural and social implications of methodology, but it also participates in the cultural elitism fostered by class divisions in advanced capitalist societies, stigmatizing translation by likening it to manual as opposed to intellectual labor. Not unexpectedly, this representation is maintained in copyright law and translators' contracts with publishers, particularly in the United States. Both British and American law define translation as a second-order product, an 'adaptation' or 'derivative work' based on an 'original work of authorship,' whose copyright, including the exclusive right 'to prepare derivative works' or 'adaptations,' is vested in the 'author.'<sup>2</sup> British law is willing to consider the translator an 'author' because he 'originates the language used,' a factor that entitles a translation to its own copyright, but that, even though it effectively collapses the distinction between 'original' and 'adaptation,' does not permit the rights of the author-translator to displace those of the 'original' author. The United States Code includes a further provision which is manifestly exploitative: a translation can be contractually defined as a 'work made for hire,' in which case 'the employer or person for whom the work was prepared is considered the author' and 'owns all of the rights comprised in the copyright.'<sup>3</sup> Incorporating such legal definitions in the interests of financial management, many standard translation contracts at trade and university publishers assign the translator below-subsistence fees 'per thousand words,' with most of the income from book and subsidiary rights sales reserved for the publishers of the translation and the foreign text (the foreign publishers acting as agents for the foreign author). The going rates, as I now write, are roughly \$60 or £40 per thousand English words; more experienced translators can command higher fees as advances against a royalty of possibly 1.5 to 2.5 percent of the list price. James Marcus estimates that for an American publisher, 'the translation cost of a substantial novel (say, 300 pages) [is] at somewhere between \$3000 and \$6000.'<sup>4</sup>

What contemporary translators write about their work tends more often than not to collude with the image of the dilettante/artisan: their discourse remains casual, belletristic, limited to sporadic prefaces, interviews, invited lectures. The American Literary Translators Association, a university-based service and advocacy organization, actually discourages 'formal papers' at its annual conference, preferring to maintain a 'tradition' in which 'your participation should consist of an informal presentation/statement of 10-15 minutes which seeks to engage the audience in a lively and discussion [*sic*] of your topic.'<sup>5</sup> The academy, where 'formal papers' constitute a genre, is utterly dependent on translations from various languages, not merely to serve as textbooks for students, supporting curricula and canons, but to enable faculty research

and university press publishing. Yet the academy has also inhibited the development of translation theory and criticism by discouraging the practice of translation, ranking it low on the scale of scholarly value and degrading it during reviews for contract renewal, tenure, and promotion. Donald Frame, the Columbia University professor whose translation of Montaigne's complete works remains a standard English version, succinctly describes the marginal status of translation in language and literature departments while evincing his own complicity in it: 'Clearly it belongs far below good literary creation, and below good literary analysis, but I think it demands much of the same sensitivity as both of these, a sensitivity shared by many booklovers whose gifts for good creation or analysis may be modest or nonexistent.'<sup>6</sup> Given Frame's hierarchy of cultural practices, it follows that 'good literary analysis' can take as its object only 'good literary creation,' certainly not a translation, the work of an amateur.

This shows that translation is marginalized today by an essentially romantic conception of authorship. The Spanish and Portuguese translator Gregory Rabassa assumes it when he points to 'the need for new translations of old books every so often while the original text goes on in all its glory':

The fact is that there is a kind of continental drift that slowly works on language as words wander away from their original spot in the lexicon and suffer the accretion of subtle new nuances, which. . . result from distortions brought about by time and the events that people it. The choice made by an earlier translator, then, no longer obtains and we must choose again. Through some instinct wrought of genius, the author's original choices of word and idiom seem to endure.<sup>7</sup>

The 'original' is eternal, the translation dates. The 'original' is an unchanging monument of the human imagination ('genius'), transcending the linguistic, cultural, and social changes of which the translation is a determinate effect. 'The choices made in translation are never as secure as those made by the author,' writes Rabassa, because 'we are not writing our own material' (p. 7). The 'original' is a form of self-expression appropriate to the author, a copy true to his personality or intention, an image endowed with resemblance, whereas the translation can be no more than a copy of a copy, derivative, simulacral, false, an image without resemblance. The hierarchy of cultural practices that ranks translation lowest is grounded on romantic expressive theory and projects a Platonic metaphysics of the text, distinguishing between the authorized copy and the simulacrum that deviates from the author.<sup>8</sup> With translation construed in romantic terms, that deviation, whatever in the translated text does not resemble the author, is sometimes given an



equally individualistic construction: it resembles the translator. 'The past experience of the individual will affect the translator,' Rabassa observes, 'People have a kind of liking for certain words, either from experience or background or by cultivated preference' (p. 7). Yet even if the translator's 'experience' can be expressed in a translation, it never makes the translation an original of the same order as the authorized copy. Today the translator remains subordinate to the author of the original work, whether in the translator's own acts of self-presentation or in academic institutions, publishing companies, and legal codes. The originality of translation rather lies in self-effacement, a vanishing act, and it is on this basis that translators prefer to be praised. When a translation is reviewed, says the Italian translator William Weaver, and 'a reviewer neglects to mention the translator at all, the translator should take this omission as a compliment: it means that the reviewer simply wasn't aware that the book had been written originally in another language. For a translator, this kind of anonymity can be a real achievement.'<sup>9</sup>

Insofar as this vanishing act must be performed in language, it coincides with the dominance of a specific discursive strategy in contemporary translation. A translated text is judged successful - by most editors, publishers, reviewers, readers, by translators themselves - when it reads fluently, when it gives the appearance that it is not translated, that it is the original, transparently reflecting the foreign author's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text.<sup>10</sup> Fluent translation strategies are implemented with varying degrees of success today, they require a laborious effort of revision and much stylistic refinement, and they are even occasionally applied to foreign texts that put to work more discontinuous discourses. Yet whatever their effectiveness, such strategies do take a characteristic form: they pursue linear syntax, univocal meaning or controlled ambiguity, current usage, linguistic consistency, conversational rhythms; they eschew unidiomatic constructions, polysemy, archaism, jargon, abrupt shifts in tone or diction, pronounced rhythmic regularity or sound repetitions - any textual effect, any play of the signifier, which calls attention to the materiality of language, to words as words, their opacity, their resistance to empathic response and interpretive mastery. Fluency tries to check the drift of language away from the conceptual signified, away from communication and self-expression. When successfully deployed, it is the strategy that produces the effect of transparency, wherein the translation is identified with the foreign text and evokes the individualistic illusion of authorial presence.

Here it becomes clear that the valorization of transparency conceals the manifold conditions under which a translation is produced and consumed - starting with the translator and the fact of translation. A fluent strategy aims to efface the translator's crucial intervention in the foreign

text: he or she actively rewrites it in a different language to circulate in a different culture, but this very process results in a self-annihilation, ultimately contributing to the cultural marginality and economic exploitation which translators suffer today. At the same time, a fluent strategy effaces the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text: this gets rewritten in the transparent discourse dominating the target-language culture and is inevitably coded with other target-language values, beliefs, and social representations, implicating the translation in ideologies that figure social differences and may well arrange them in hierarchical relations (according to class, gender, sexual orientation, race, nation). In this rewriting, a fluent strategy performs a labor of acculturation which domesticates the foreign text, making it intelligible and even familiar to the target-language reader, providing him or her with the narcissistic experience of recognizing his or her own culture in a cultural other, enacting an imperialism that extends the dominion of transparency with other ideological discourses over a different culture. Moreover, since fluency leads to translations that are eminently readable and therefore consumable on the book market, it assists in their commodification and contributes to the cultural and economic hegemony of target-language publishers.

When the target language is contemporary English, transparent discourse sustains the grossly unequal cultural exchanges between the hegemonic English-language nations, particularly the United States, and their others in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas. In the decades since World War II, many foreign publishers have routinely translated large numbers of the most varied English-language books, exploiting the global drift toward American political and economic hegemony, actively supporting the international expansion of American culture by circulating it in their national cultures. For instance, approximately 26 percent of the books published annually in Italy are translated, with the largest proportion from English; when literary publishing is considered, the figure rises precipitously to 50, 70, even 90 percent of an individual publisher's output.<sup>11</sup> The practices of British and American publishers have run in the opposite direction. In the immediate post-war period, they issued a large but select body of translations mostly from European languages, capitalizing not only on reader curiosity about once excluded foreign cultures, but also on reader optimism that renewed cultural exchange would facilitate better cross-cultural understanding and more peaceful geopolitical relations. The next thirty years saw a general decline in the publishing of translations, since Anglo-American publishers increasingly invested in bestsellers and the development of multinational publishing conglomerates brought greater financial control over editorial policies.<sup>12</sup> Near the end of the eighties, the number of English-language translations rose slightly, as trade publishers were forced to compete against new translation initiatives at university and small presses. But this increase was minimal: in the six-year period between

1984 and 1990, translations accounted for approximately 3.5 percent of the books published annually in the United States, 2.5 percent in the United Kingdom.<sup>13</sup>

The consequences of such translation patterns are wide-ranging and insidious, resisting neat formulation. In general, however, it can be said that Anglo-American publishing has been instrumental in producing readers who are aggressively monolingual and culturally parochial while reaping the economic benefits of successfully imposing Anglo-American cultural values on a sizeable foreign readership. The historian Sergio Romano incisively described the situation between the United States and other countries in 1982, when he was serving as Director General of Cultural Relations at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 'if one is intelligible within the outlook of American ideology, then one has a chance of being translated.'<sup>14</sup> Most of the English-language translations that have seen print since World War II, furthermore, implement fluent strategies, evoking the illusion of authorial presence, maintaining the cultural dominance of Anglo-American individualism, representing foreign cultures with ideological discourses specific to English-language cultures - but concealing all these determinations and effects under the veil of transparency.

It is this situation that looms over any effort to address translation today, rarely getting the scrutiny it so urgently demands. The present anthology proposes an intervention designed to challenge it: to make translation visible by developing a theoretical discourse to study the conditions of the translator's work, the discursive strategies and institutional structures which determine the production, circulation, and reception of translated texts. The essays share the assumption that translation must be submitted to the same rigorous interrogation that other cultural forms and practices have recently undergone with the emergence of poststructuralism and its impact on such theoretical and political discourses as psychoanalysis, Marxism, and feminism. Yet the essays also exemplify how these discourses in turn interrogate and revise poststructuralist theory, especially when they take as their object a practice with the far-reaching cultural and social implications of translation. The aim of the anthology is to provoke a rethinking of translation that is philosophical, but also political, engaged in questions of language, discourse, and subjectivity, while articulating their relations to cultural difference, ideological contradiction, and social conflict.

Poststructuralism has in fact initiated a radical reconsideration of the traditional topoi of translation theory. Largely through commentaries on Walter Benjamin's essay 'The Task of the Translator,' poststructuralist thinkers like Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man explode the binary opposition between 'original' and 'translation' which underwrites the translator's invisibility today.<sup>15</sup> They do not proceed by elevating the

## INTRODUCTION

translation into another original and turning the translator into an author, but instead question the concepts of originality and authorship that subordinate the translation to the foreign text. They argue that what makes the foreign text original is not so much that it is considered the coherent expression of authorial meaning, but that it is deemed worthy of translation, that it is destined to live what Benjamin calls an 'afterlife' (*Überleben*) in a derivative form like translation: 'Translations that are more than transmissions of subject matter,' writes Benjamin, 'come into being when in the course of its survival a work has reached the age of its fame. . . . The life of the originals attains in them to its ever-renewed latest and most abundant flowering' (p. 72). A translation canonizes the foreign text, validating its fame by enabling its survival. Yet the afterlife made possible by translation simultaneously cancels the originality of the foreign text by revealing its dependence on a derivative form: translation does not so much validate literary fame as create it. 'That the original was not purely canonical,' de Man notes, 'is clear from the fact that it demands translation; it cannot be definitive since it can be translated. . . . The translation canonizes, freezes, an original and shows in the original a mobility, an instability, which at first one did not notice' (p. 82). Derrida's formulation fastens on Benjamin's use of organic metaphors:

The translation will truly be a moment in the growth of the original, which will complete itself *in* enlarging itself. . . . And if the original calls for a complement, it is because at the origin it was not there without fault, full, complete, total, identical to itself.'

('Des tours de Babel,' p. 188)

The 'mobility' or 'fault' in the original is what Derrida has described as *différance*, the signifying movement in language whereby the signified is an effect of relations and differences along a potentially endless chain of signifiers and therefore is always differential and deferred, never present as a unity.<sup>16</sup> This means that the original is itself a translation, an incomplete process of translating a signifying chain into a univocal signified, and this process is both displayed and further complicated when it is translated by another signifying chain in a different language.

The originality of the foreign text is thus compromised by the poststructuralist concept of textuality. Neither the foreign text nor the translation is an original semantic unity; both are derivative and heterogeneous, consisting of diverse linguistic and cultural materials which destabilize the work of signification, making meaning plural and differential, exceeding and possibly conflicting with the intentions of the foreign writer and the translator. Poststructuralist textuality redefines the notion of equivalence in translation by assuming from the outset that the differential plurality in every text precludes a simple correspondence of meaning, that a ratio of loss and gain inevitably occurs during the

translation process and situates the translation in an equivocal, asymptotic relationship to the foreign text. Even though most translators regard this relationship as mimetic, striving to create a reproduction based on their estimation of the meaning of the foreign text, the heterogeneous textual work insures that the translation is transformative and interrogative as well: it sets going a deconstruction of the foreign text. 'The line that I seek to recognize within translatability, between two translations,' writes Derrida, 'one governed by the classical model of transportable univocality or of formalizable polysemia, and the other, which goes over into dissemination - this line also passes between the critical and the deconstructive' ('Border Lines,' p. 93). A translation is never quite 'faithful,' always somewhat 'free,' it never establishes an identity, always a lack and a supplement, and it can never be a transparent representation, only an interpretive transformation that exposes multiple and divided meanings in the foreign text and displaces it with another set of meanings, equally multiple and divided.

This point releases translation from its subordination to the foreign text and makes possible the development of a hermeneutic that reads the translation as a text in its own right, as a weave of connotations, allusions, and discourses specific to the target-language culture. Derrida and de Man, however, limit this development by submitting translation to the recurrent repression of social and historical determinations that characterizes poststructuralist textual theory, especially in its Anglo-American reception.<sup>17</sup> This is partly due to the fact that they couch their treatments of translation in commentaries on Benjamin's essay, reserving their most nimble theoretical moves for his notion of 'pure language.' Benjamin posits a

suprahistorical kinship of languages [which] rests in the intention underlying each language as a whole - an intention, however, which no single language can attain by itself but which is realized only by the totality of their intentions supplementing each other: pure language.

(p. 74)

For Benjamin, 'it is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work' (p. 80). Whatever meaning may be assigned to Benjamin's notion of 'pure language,' both Derrida and de Man construe it according to the poststructuralist concept of language as a differential plurality: 'it is the being-language of the language,' writes Derrida, 'tongue or language *as such*, that unity without any self-identity, which makes for the fact that there are languages and that they are languages' ('Des tours de Babel,' p. 201), while de Man states that 'a pure language . . . does not exist except

as a permanent disjunction which inhabits all languages as such,' adding that 'it is this errancy of language, this illusion of a life that is only an afterlife, that Benjamin calls history' (p. 92).<sup>18</sup> As a result, the post-structuralist concept of language is assigned a suprahistorical status, and each translated text is allegorized as a transcendental 'errancy of language,' removed from its particular social and historical circumstances.

If 'history,' in de Man's words, 'pertains strictly to the order of language,' and 'the structure that animates it is not a temporal structure' (p. 92), it is still possible to recognize that language is errant in socially and historically specific ways. A text is a heterogeneous artifact, composed of disruptive forms of semiosis like polysemy and intertextuality, but it is nonetheless constrained by the social institutions in which it is produced and consumed, and its constitutive materials, including the other texts that it assimilates and transforms, link it to a particular historical moment.<sup>19</sup> It is these social and historical affiliations that are inscribed in the choice of a foreign text for translation and in the materiality of the translated text, in its discursive strategy and its range of allusiveness for the target-language reader. And it is these affiliations that permit translation to function as a cultural political practice, constructing or critiquing ideology-stamped identities for foreign cultures, contributing to the formation or subversion of literary canons, affirming or transgressing institutional limits.

Derrida elsewhere shows his awareness of these political issues, specifically as they relate to the dominance of transparent discourse in contemporary translation. In the journal notes addressed to the translator of his essay 'Living On,' he observes that translation is

a political-institutional problem of the University: it, like all teaching in its traditional form, and perhaps all teaching whatever, has as its ideal, with exhaustive translatability, the effacement of language. The deconstruction of a pedagogical institution and all that it implies. What this institution cannot bear, is for anyone to tamper with language, meaning *both* the national language *and*, paradoxically, an ideal of translatability that neutralizes this national language. Nationalism and universalism. What this institution cannot bear is a transformation that leaves intact neither of these two complementary poles. It can bear more readily the most apparently revolutionary ideological sorts of 'content,' if only that content does not touch the borders of language and of all the juridicopolitical contracts that it guarantees. It is this 'intolerable' something that concerns me here. It is related in an essential way to that which . . . brings out the limits of the concept of translation on which the university is built, particularly when it makes the teaching of

language, even literatures, and even 'comparative literature,' its principal theme.

('Border Lines,' pp. 93-6)<sup>20</sup>

This important if fragmentary analysis shows that any attempt to make translation visible today is necessarily a political gesture: it at once discloses and contests the nationalist ideology implicit in the marginal status of translation in universities, forcing a revaluation of pedagogical practices and disciplinary divisions which depend on translated texts. Yet such an analysis remains too narrowly restricted, not just to academic institutions, but to the present. It can gain considerable interpretive and political power if it is extended to other institutionalized cultural practices, like the publishing and reviewing of translated texts, to other dimensions of translation, like theoretical statements and discursive strategies, and to other ideological determinations, like class, gender, and race. And the objects of analysis should not only encompass a broader spectrum of cultural forms and practices, but be taken from various historical periods and put to a thoroughgoing historicization. This means embedding cultural forms and practices in historical narratives which are thick with archival detail, but called forth by the present, in fact written against the contemporary invisibility of translation, tracing the genealogy of this moment while searching the past for exits, alternative theories and practices of translation.<sup>21</sup> Narratives of historical change in which translation figures can serve two specifically political functions, one critical, clarifying its potential role in precipitating social transformation, the other utopian, illuminating possibilities for social life that are not yet conscious or realized in the present.<sup>22</sup>

With these qualifications in mind, we can recognize that poststructuralist translation theory lays the groundwork for an incisive method of reading translations. A translation emerges as an active reconstitution of the foreign text mediated by the irreducible linguistic, discursive, and ideological differences of the target-language culture. These differences can be articulated in two kinds of close analysis: comparisons of the source- and target-language texts which explore the ratio of loss and gain between them and reveal the translator's discursive strategy as well as any unforeseen effects; and examinations of discontinuities in the translation itself, the heterogeneous textual work of assimilating target-language cultural materials that are intended to reproduce the source-language text, but that inevitably supplement it. Since cultural practices are always already social in their significance and functioning, shared by specific social groups, inscribed with ideologies that serve the competing interests of those groups, housed in institutions that constitute centers of power in any social formation, the analysis of translation can also include its ideological and institutional determinations, resulting in detailed studies

that situate the translated text in its social and historical circumstances and consider its cultural political role. This would involve examining the place and practice of translation in specific cultures, addressing such questions as which foreign texts are selected for translation and which discursive strategies are used to translate them, which texts, strategies, and translations are canonized or marginalized, and which social groups are served by them.

Such a translation hermeneutic assumes a notion of agency that allows for the full complexity of the translator's work. Following other post-structuralist thinkers like Michel Foucault, it treats the translating subject as discursively constructed in self-presentations, theoretical statements, legal codes, contracts, the very process of developing a translation strategy, of selecting and arranging signifiers.<sup>23</sup> Yet it seeks to avoid any deterministic view of the translator's work that would foreclose the possibility of critical reflection and political action by imagining that the translation process admits various levels of calculation which are contingent on material determinations. The translator is the agent of a cultural practice that is conducted under continuous self-monitoring and often with active consultation of cultural rules and resources, ranging from dictionaries and grammars to other texts, discursive strategies, and translations, both canonical and marginal. But insofar as these rules and resources are specific to the target-language culture and operative in social institutions, the translation is located in an intertextual and ideological configuration that may escape the translator's consciousness to some extent and result in unanticipated consequences, like social reproduction or change.<sup>24</sup> The translator's unconscious is textual, since, as Derrida indicates, 'a text can stand in a relationship of transference (primarily in the psychoanalytical sense) to another text' ('Border Lines,' p. 147), mapping trajectories of desire through tropes and intertextual relations. Yet this is necessarily a political unconscious as well, sedimented with ideological contradictions, shaped by institutional constraints, involving translation in larger, social conflicts. Most importantly, these material determinations and effects need not remain entirely unconscious: a socially aware and politically engaged translator can reckon them in the choice of a foreign text and the development of a discursive strategy, taking the target language on what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari would call a 'line of escape' from the cultural and social hierarchies which that language supports, using translation to 'deterritorialize' it.<sup>25</sup>

Alternative translation practices that can effect such a deterritorialization have been appearing in the wake of poststructuralist textual theory. These are partly the result of problems created by the daunting task of translating Derrida's inventive and self-reflexive writing into English. In discussing an English-language version of Derrida's essay 'La myth-



ologie blanche,' Philip Lewis argues for a more sophisticated translation strategy that acknowledges the complications poststructuralism has brought to translation, particularly the concept of meaning as a differential plurality, and that therefore shifts the translator's attention away from the signified 'to the chain of signifiers, to syntactic processes, to discursive structures, to the incidence of language mechanisms on thought and reality formation, and so forth.'<sup>26</sup> What is at stake here is a 'new axiomatics of fidelity' which Lewis terms 'abusive': the translator seeks to reproduce whatever features of the foreign text abuse or resist dominant cultural values in the source language, yet this reproductive effort requires the invention of analogous means of signification that are doubly abusive, that resist dominant cultural values in the target language, but supplement the foreign text by rewriting it in that language. Lewis observes that

the real possibility of translation – the translatability that emerges in the movement of difference as a fundamental property of languages – points to a risk to be assumed: that of the strong, forceful translation that values experimentation, tampers with usage, seeks to match the polyvalencies or plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing its own.

(p. 41)

Abusive fidelity clearly entails a rejection of the fluency that dominates contemporary translation in favor of an opposing strategy that can aptly be called resistancy. Hence, it has so far proved most useful in translating texts that foreground the play of the signifier by cultivating polysemy, neologism, fragmented syntax, discursive heterogeneity – namely, post-structuralist theoretical statements, postmodern narratives, and feminist experiments in prose and poetry that reflect Hélène Cixous's concept of *écriture féminine*.<sup>27</sup> Both the Quebec writer Nicole Brossard and her translator Barbara Godard, for example, aim to combat the hierarchical construction of gender identities in patriarchal ideology by developing a kind of writing that is 'working (in) the in-between,' pursuing 'a multiple and inexhaustible course with millions of encounters and transformations of the same into the other and into the in-between, from which woman takes her forms (and man, in his turn; but that's his other history)' ('The Laugh of the Medusa,' p. 287). The result is an extremely discontinuous textuality in which the translator inventively joins in the production of meaning, undermining conventional representations that not only subordinate translator to author, but also metaphorize authorship as male and translation as female. Because resistant translation strategies preclude the illusionistic effect of transparency in the translated text, their implementation carries other, equally political consequences. On the one hand, such strategies can help to make the translator's work

## INTRODUCTION

visible, inviting a critical appreciation of its cultural political function and a re-examination of the inferior status it is currently assigned in the law, in publishing, in education. On the other hand, resistant strategies can help to preserve the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text by producing translations which are strange and estranging, which mark the limits of dominant values in the target-language culture and hinder those values from enacting an imperialistic domestication of a cultural other.

'Translation,' writes Blanchot, 'is the sheer play of difference: it constantly makes allusion to difference, dissimulates difference, but by occasionally revealing and often accentuating it, translation becomes the very life of this difference.'<sup>28</sup> This view, however, has yet to gain acceptance in Anglo-American culture, not only because translation has for so long remained discursively concealed and culturally marginalized, supporting a process of assimilating rather than living difference, but because English and English-language values achieved global dominance in the post-war period, establishing in the United States and Britain nationalist cultural environments receptive to foreign texts mainly when they are or can be read as ideologically compatible. Nevertheless, translation is a cultural practice that occupies a tactical position today, privileged by recent international developments. The erosion of American political and economic hegemony, the dismantling of state socialism and the move toward market economies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the reluctance of the Chinese Communist government to abandon entirely its liberalizing experiments, despite its continued reliance on political repression, all insure that cross-cultural exchange will increase and develop in new and unexpected directions. Consequently, it becomes essential to recognize that translation in its many aspects – from the selection of foreign texts to the implementation of discursive strategies to the reviewing and teaching of translations – wields enormous power in the construction of national identities and hence can play an important geopolitical role. The most useful form this recognition can take is the elaboration of the theoretical, critical, and textual means by which translation can be studied and practiced as the locus of difference. The essays that follow constitute a contribution to this project.

## NOTES

- 1 See, for example, *The Translator's Art: Essays in Honour of Betty Radice*, ed. William Radice and Barbara Reynolds (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987); *The Art of Translation: Voices from the Field*, ed. Rosanna Warren (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989); and *The Craft of Translation*, ed. John Biguenet and Rainer Schulte (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). *The Craft of Translation* is published in a series of how-to books, 'Chicago

- Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing.' Rosanna Warren's anthology, despite its title, differs from the others in including several essays distinguished by their critical and theoretical sophistication.
- 2 Copyright Act 1956 (4 and 5 Eliz 2 c. 74), section 2 (6)(a)(iii); 17 US Code, sections 101, 102, 106, 201(a) (1976).
  - 3 E. P. Skone James, John F. Mummery, and J. E. Rayner James, *Copinger and Skone Jones on Copyright*, 12th ed. (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1980), pp. 322ff.; 17 US Code, sections 101, 201(b) (1976). Jacques Derrida notes how the artisanal representation of the translator underwrites the fragile logic of originality in current French copyright law: see 'Des Tours de Babel,' in *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 196-9, 240-2.
  - 4 James Marcus, 'Foreign Exchange,' *Village Voice Literary Supplement*, 82 (February 1990): 13-17, especially 13-14. Edmund Keeley reports the results of a recent survey of publishers' translation practices in 'The Commerce of Translation,' *PEN American Center Newsletter*, 73 (Fall 1990): 10-12. Michael Glenny described the situation of British translators in 'Professional Prospects,' *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 October 1983, p. 1118. See also John Gardam, 'The Institute of Translation and Interpreting Survey of Rates and Salaries,' *Professional Translator and Interpreter*, 1 (1990), pp. 5-14. The standard British translator's contract is included in *Publishing Agreements: A Book of Precedents*, ed. Charles Clark (London: Allen and Unwin, 1980), pp. 53-61. The Translation Committee of PEN American Center includes 'A Translator's Model Contract' - described as 'an ideal toward which the Committee feels all translators should strive' - in *A Handbook for Literary Translators*, 2nd ed. (New York: PEN American Center, 1991).
  - 5 *American Literary Translators Association Newsletter*, 41 (May 1990): 1.
  - 6 Donald Frame, 'Pleasures and Problems of Translation,' in *The Craft of Translation*, pp. 70-92 (70). Susan Bassnett-McGuire discusses some of 'the conflicting attitudes towards translation in the English-speaking world' in *Translation Studies* (London and New York: Methuen, 1980), pp. 1-5.
  - 7 Gregory Rabassa, 'No Two Snowflakes are Alike: Translation as Metaphor,' in *The Craft of Translation*, pp. 1-12 (8).
  - 8 This draws on Gilles Deleuze, 'Plato and the Simulacrum,' *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 253-66. Antoine Berman offers an incisive discussion of this aspect of translation in 'L'essence platonicienne de la traduction,' *Revue d'Esthétique*, 12 (1986): 63-73. For romantic expressive theory, see M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953).
  - 9 Lawrence Venuti, 'The Art of Literary Translation: An Interview with William Weaver,' *Denver Quarterly*, 17:2 (1982): 16-26 (26). Weaver's sophisticated translation practice belies the invisibility advocated in this self-presentation - especially when he is translating texts with the discursive heterogeneity of Umberto Eco's novels and so is driven to develop noticeably innovative strategies. See his remarkable 'Pendulum Diary,' *Southwest Review*, 75:2 (1990): 150-78.
  - 10 I discuss this aspect of current English-language translation at greater length in 'The Translator's Invisibility,' *Criticism*, 28 (1986): 179-212. Antoine Berman argues that fluency, or what he calls 'hypertextuality,' has dominated translation in the West since the Hellenization of the Roman Republic: see

## INTRODUCTION

'La Traduction de la lettre, ou l'auberge du lointain,' in *Les Tours de Babel: Essais sur la traduction* (Mauvezin: Trans-Europ-Repress, 1985), pp. 31-150, especially pp. 50-1.

- 11 The state of cultural exchange between Italy and the United States is the subject of *The Italian Book in America/Il libro italiano in America*, ed. Ornella Munafò, trans. Kristin Jarratt (New York: The Translation Center, 1986). This is a special issue of the journal *Translation* which contains the proceedings of a 1982 conference on 'The Italian Book and American Publishing: Translation and Market' held at the American Academy in Rome. My account of publishing patterns in English-language translation since World War II is indebted to Frank MacShane's 'Introduction,' pp. 5-10. See also my essay on the conference, 'Innocents Abroad?,' *Attenzione*, January 1983, pp. 16-20. More recently, Carlin Romano has noted that 'since 1988, the Italians have translated about 3500 books from English, the majority of them by American authors; from 1983 to 1989, only 294 Italian books reached American bookstores in translation': see 'The Crowd of Turin: Book Fair Italian Style,' *Village Voice*, 3 July 1990, p. 70. The latest figures are available in Herbert R. Lottman, 'Milan: a world of change,' *Publishers Weekly*, 21 June 1991, pp. 5-11.
- 12 These developments have been documented by Thomas Whiteside, *The Blockbuster Complex: Conglomerates, Show Business, and Book Publishing* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1981). See also Gayle Feldman, 'Going Global,' *Publishers Weekly*, 19 December 1986, pp. 20-4. The international publishing corporations that began to appear during the eighties include mostly American, British, and German publishers. Roger Cohen reports on the merger of Harper and Row and William Collins and Sons in 'Birth of a Global Book Giant,' *New York Times*, 11 June 1990, pp. D1, D10.
- 13 See the annual statistics presented by Chandler B. Grannis in *Publishers Weekly*, 29 September 1989, pp. 24-5, 9 March 1990, pp. 32-5, and March 1991, pp. 36-9. For the British statistics, see *Whitaker's Almanack* for the years 1986 to 1991.
- 14 Sergio Romano, 'Discussion,' in *The Italian Book in America/Il libro italiano in America*, pp. 93-5 (94). The perennial rush to publish or bring back into print English-language translations of Nobel laureates, most recently writers like Jaroslav Seifert, Claude Simon, Naguib Mahfouz, and Camilo José Cela who long ago achieved canonical status in their native cultures, indicates some of the languages and genres underrepresented in Anglo-American publishing of foreign texts (viz. Arabic, Eastern European languages, experimentalism). On the cultural marginality of non-Western European languages in current English-language translation, see Marcus, 'Foreign Exchange,' pp. 15-16. Edward W. Said addresses the particularly acute situation of Arabic writing in Anglo-American culture in 'Embargoed Literature,' *The Nation*, 17 September 1990, pp. 278-80. Armand Matelart examines the politics of global cultural relations, especially in the electronic media, in *Multinational Corporations and the Control of Culture: The Ideological Apparatuses of Imperialism*, trans. Michael Chanan (Brighton: Harvester, 1979).
- 15 Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator' (1923), *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), pp. 69-82. Benjamin's essay is his introduction to his translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux parisiens*. Derrida's commentary on translation includes 'Border Lines,' the text printed at the bottom of the pages of his essay 'Living On,' trans. James Hulbert, in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1979), pp. 75-176, and 'Roundtable on Translation' (1979), in *The Ear*

of the Other: *Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, ed. Christie V. McDonald, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Schocken, 1985), pp. 91–161. Derrida's 'Des Tours de Babel' (1980), in *Difference in Translation*, is a fuller development of several ideas presented in 'Roundtable on Translation.' Paul de Man's foray into translation theory is the lecture ' "Conclusions": Walter Benjamin's The Task of the Translator' (1983), in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 73–105. Andrew Benjamin presents a systematic poststructuralist reflection on translation which engages with key texts in the history of philosophy and translation theory in *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy: A New Theory of Words* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

- 16 Jacques Derrida, 'Différance' (1968), *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 1–27. See also Jacques Derrida, 'Semiology and Grammatology: Interview with Julia Kristeva,' *Positions* (1972), trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 24:

In the limits to which it is possible, or at least appears possible, translation practices the difference between signified and signifier. But if this difference is never pure, no more so is translation, and for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of *transformation*: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another. We will never have, and in fact have never had, to do with some 'transport' of pure signifieds from one language to another, or within one and the same language, that the signifying instrument would leave virgin and untouched.

- 17 See, for example, Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), chapters 5 and 8, and Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), chapter 4. Christopher Norris argues for a more nuanced account of the political implications of de Man's work in *Paul de Man: Deconstruction and the Critique of Aesthetic Ideology* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988).
- 18 Concerning the notion of 'pure language,' Andrew Benjamin similarly argues that 'it marks the sameness of languages while allowing for their differences' and for 'the word as the site of differential plurality,' but unlike Derrida and de Man, he also admits that 'this may be to interpret Benjamin against the grain' and insists on the importance of the 'ontologico-temporal' specification of linguistic differences: see *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy*, chapters 4 and 6, especially pp. 103, 108, and 180.
- 19 John Frow argues these points at length in *Marxism and Literary History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).
- 20 Cf. de Man's unwillingness to consider the political dimensions of his work in an interview given immediately after his lecture on Benjamin's essay: 'Derrida feels compelled to say more about the institution of the university, but that is more understandable within the European context, where the university has such a predominating cultural function, whereas in the United States it has no cultural function at all, here it is not inscribed in the genuine cultural tensions of the nation.' Stefano Rosso, 'An Interview with Paul de Man,' in *The Resistance to Theory*, pp. 115–21 (117).
- 21 For a provocative example of this kind of analysis, see Tom Conley, 'Institutionalizing Translation: On Florio's Montaigne,' in *Demarcating the*

## INTRODUCTION

- Disciplines: Philosophy, Literature, Art*, ed. Samuel Weber, *Glyph Textual Studies I* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 45–60. Antoine Berman's search for alternatives to the fluent, ethnocentric translations that dominate contemporary French culture led him to reconstruct the German translation tradition, valorizing in particular the theories of Goethe and Schleiermacher and the practices of Hölderlin, in *L'Épreuve de l'étranger: Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).
- 22 This draws on Ernst Bloch's work: see, for example, 'The Conscious and Known Activity within the Not-Yet-Conscious, The Utopian Function' (1959), *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, ed. and trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), pp. 103–41.
  - 23 See Michel Foucault, 'What Is an Author?' (1969), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. and trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 113–38.
  - 24 These remarks assume Anthony Giddens' concept of agency in *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), especially chap. 2.
  - 25 See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), especially chap. 3.
  - 26 Philip E. Lewis, 'The Measure of Translation Effects,' in *Difference in Translation*, pp. 31–62 (42).
  - 27 For discussions of translation problems posed by these kinds of texts, see, for example, Barbara Johnson, 'Translator's Introduction,' in Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), especially pp. xviii–xix, and 'Taking Fidelity Philosophically,' in *Difference in Translation*, pp. 142–8; Dana Polan, 'Translator's Introduction,' in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, especially pp. xxvii–xxviii; Suzanne Jill Levine, 'From "Little Painted Lips" to *Heartbreak Tango*,' in *The Art of Translation: Voices from the Field*, pp. 30–46; and Barbara Godard, 'Translating and Sexual Difference,' *Resources for Feminist Research*, 13:3 (November 1984): 13–16, and 'Preface,' in Nicole Brossard, *Louvers*, trans. Barbara Godard (Montreal: Guernica, 1986), pp. 7–12. For the concept of *écriture féminine*, see Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1976), trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, in *The Signs Reader: Women, Gender, and Scholarship*, ed. Elizabeth Abel and Emily Abel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 279–97.
  - 28 Maurice Blanchot, 'Translating' (1967), trans. Richard Sieburth, *Sulfur*, 26 (1990): 82–6 (83).

# TRANSLATING ORIGINS: PSYCHOANALYSIS AND PHILOSOPHY

*Andrew Benjamin*

If translation does not start as the original question then it is, at the very least, a start in the questioning of the origin.<sup>1</sup> The origin as that which is put into question brings psychoanalysis and translation into contact since both are marked by the inevitability and necessity within their origins - including their own conception of the origin - of the process named within psychoanalysis as *Nachträglichkeit*; a term which at this stage can be translated as 'deferred action,' or 'action at a distance.'<sup>2</sup> The tentative nature of these translations does not gesture to the provisional as opposed to the final, it is rather that it attests to the difficulty of the task projected by having to think the stakes of this term. Moreover, an important part of any subsequent attempt to undertake this task will have to include specifying the 'action' envisaged and tracing the effect of the 'distance' involved. Despite the inherently complex nature of this project, an integral component of the translation problem presented by *Nachträglichkeit* will have already been provided by the process that it, in some sense, names. Identifying this component brings about, within the shift of tenses, a shift to naming. With this reworking the origin itself comes to be reworked. And yet it should also be remembered that there is more involved here than a simple connection or interrelation since translation figures from the start within psychoanalysis. Rather than trace the multitude of references, the repetition of the word 'Übersetzung' and its many correlates (e.g. 'Umsetzung'), one will have to introduce, and thus prop, the discussion to come; i.e., the letter written by Freud to Wilhelm Fleiss on 6 December 1896.

Prior to tracing the work of this specific reference, the perdurance of the origin should be indicated. The origin here is the origin of convention; tradition's origin. It yields to, if only because it yields, a fascination, as much sedulous as discursive, for that moment marking the beginning. A start which is the point where something will have begun. (The point or moment will always involve both ontological as well as temporal considerations.) Following the convention, the demands of tradition, any return to the start will generate it again - the start again - where the

'again' is intended to avoid degeneration because of its incorporation or reincorporation into that construal of repetition in which the process of repetition is structured and governed by the Same. The Same sustains a conception of repetition in which what is repeated remains, despite the work of time, self-identical. The possibility of the inscription of difference is excluded. The viability, let alone the durability, of this exclusion remains an open question.

Many commentators have referred to the importance of the letters written by Freud to Fleiss, and in particular the letter of 6 December 1896. Of the different permutations that translation acquires within it perhaps the most significant in this instance is the following: 'Die Versagung der Übersetzung, das ist das, was klinisch "Verdrängung" heisst.'<sup>3</sup> In passing, the unavoidability of translation should be stated in advance. Repression, within the frame of the letter, is then the clinical meaning ('heisst') of what elsewhere is a 'Versagung der Übersetzung.' It is essential to note that repression is, in the move from the non-clinical to the clinical, already a translation; a carrying over from one domain to the other. In other words, 'Die Versagung der Übersetzung' is, even within the confines of one language, already a translation; namely of 'Verdrängung.' The presence of the already present translation is of considerable significance, since it opens up as a translation the problematic nature of translation, i.e., within the confines of this sentence, it is translation that puts into play the problem of translation. The question that must be asked therefore is, of what is it a translation? In other words, what has come to be translated? These questions gesture towards the translated event and thus to the event of translation. They mark out that which is already taking place. The event is not outside. Indeed, the problem of the 'event' is already at work within translation. (This 'within' does not designate a space as such, rather it brings into play a series of relationships as much contingent as symbiotic.) Any attempt to give greater clarity or specificity to the event will have to involve a reconsideration of its ontologico-temporal nature. The event cannot be merely posited as though it were given within the exclusive singularity of a specific mode of being. Moreover, there is a connection of considerable importance between the event and the origin. Once the origin is no longer the *arché* – the beginning within the Same, the same beginning – but an origin whose repetition involves the logic of the again and the anew, such that its re-presentation will always take place again and for the first time, then this reworking of the origin establishes a point of intersection between the event and the origin since both are now articulated within, as well as articulating, the movement and temporal spacing which is designated by the term *Nachträglichkeit*. How this designation is to be understood is a question that will be addressed throughout the proceeding.



Freud's letter opens by specifying the question of translation. Even if repression translates 'die Versagung der Übersetzung' what is left open or unanswered is the following question: what is its translation? While holding the general question of translation open, a way ahead will have already been provided by other translations of this line. Masson, in his edition of the letters, taking up the lead set by the Strachey translation, translates the whole sentence as: 'A failure of translation – this is what is known clinically as "repression." '4 'Versagung' is now 'failure.' Prior to pursuing the consequences of this failure there is a preliminary problem. Even if it has to be assumed that the problem of the translation of 'heisst' as 'known' can, at this stage, only be noted, it is nonetheless worth recognizing this intrusion of knowledge into semantics; of knowing into meaning. It will be essential to return to this discursive substitution in order to begin an attempted clarification of the relationship between epistemology and judgment within psychoanalysis. The problematic nature of this relationship figures in Masson's translation.

Jean Laplanche, in a recent article, 'Spécificité des problèmes terminologiques dans la traduction de Freud,'<sup>5</sup> translates the opening segment of the sentence as 'un refusment de traduction.' (The neologism of 'un refusment' must also be noted.<sup>6</sup>) As a point of departure it is clear that the two possibilities, 'a failure of translation,' 'un refusment de traduction,' do not straightforwardly, at least in the straightforward and hence problematic sense of translation, translate each other. There is therefore an apparent failure of translation. There would seem to be only one alternative if the inevitability of such an outcome is to be avoided; recourse must be made to the source, to the origin. What then, here, is the original? The response is unproblematic, 'Die Versagung der Übersetzung.' An expression which is itself a term that comes, within the clinical context, to be translated by 'Verdrängung.' The difficulties are compounded. The problematic element is not the presence of the difficulty of translation within psychoanalysis, nor is it a regional difficulty, since the question – what is the original? – depends for its force, both heuristic and ontological, upon an answer to a more fundamental philosophical question; i.e., what is an origin? This is the question from the start. Here, however, it will be pursued concretely: what is an origin within psychoanalysis?

As a prelude to any consideration of the origin, what needs to be brought into consideration are two elements whose ineliminable presence – a presence always at work – traverses the psychoanalytic as well as the philosophical. The first is time and the second is style. In relation to the second of these points François Roustang, in *Psychoanalysis Never Lets Go*, introduces an important connection between translation and style. Style here refers to the text's self-presentation. It is a connection that

bears upon the origin since it involves the status of what comes to be translated.

Freud's writing loses all of its vigour and even its meaning in the majority of French translations and even in the English translation of the *Standard Edition*, because the translators are only interested in rendering the overall meaning of a sentence defined by its syntax without concerning themselves with word placement and repetitions. If parataxis is to be respected in Freud's text, it is because his writing is itself the machine that he puts together: in other words, this machine is his discourse and one cannot displace its parts without disrupting its function.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the timely nature of Roustang's warning, it still leaves open the question of what exactly is involved in respecting parataxis. Since style opens the question of its own significance rather than answering and thereby closing off the question of signification, it follows that just posing the question of style is on its own far from sufficient. Is it, for example, a different state of affairs in regard to Freud's texts than it would be in reading C. F. Meyer's novella *Die Richterin* or his short story 'Gustav Adolphs Page,' the latter being the text in which Freud, in another letter to Fleiss, 9 June 1898, noted two examples of *Nachträglichkeit*?<sup>8</sup> (The specific formulation is 'den Gedanken der Nachträglichkeit.' It will be necessary to return to this formulation and thus to the 'thought' or 'idea' of *Nachträglichkeit*.) Style is inevitability linked to genre and therefore to the specific expectations of reading. In regard to the question of style it may be, at this stage, sufficient to indicate that the analyst as translator is only ever interested, even if only as a prelude, in parataxis. (It will be seen that the prelude in question posits translation both as an origin, as well as at the origin.) In order to dwell upon these questions it is essential to turn to time because it is within time that the question of the origin and its translation, even its existence as the always already translated, comes to be posed. This does not mean that style is displaced, it is rather that the displacement that, in part, is style is the enactment of the process of translation, one with rather than without the other.

Any approach to time that eschews reducing it to the recitation of dates and the establishing of a chronology – while of course including them as determinations that can never be either absolute or exhaustive – overcomes simplicity by forming a complex. Part of that complex will be the date, however no longer as the absolute singular point, but as the pragma.<sup>9</sup> This complex will both form and inform its own expression. While it will remain the case that time brings with it the centrality of ontology and experience within philosophy, the difficulty with such claims will always reside in the sense that is to be given to the 'with.'

Posing time within a framework established by connectives and conjunctions – e.g. ‘with,’ ‘and’ – seems to suggest that it is possible to posit the other elements or components to which time is connected independently of time itself. The independence suggested by the positioning of such terms means, moreover, that what eludes consideration is the possibility of either existence or time working to delimit the other in an original sense. Any subsequent delimitation or mediation is premised upon an initial singular and isolated positing.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the contrary is the case, for it must be recognised that in spite of the disjunctive (as well as the conjunctive) force of terms such as ‘with,’ ‘and,’ etc., time and existence, rather than being brought together and therefore involving a relation to come, are always already interarticulated. (Part of the argument for this interarticulation is that thinking the conditions of possibility of a given mode of being or mode of temporality will bring with it as an ineliminable component the temporality or existence entailed by that mode. Within this revision of the transcendental argument entailment does not entail a temporal sequence, but on the contrary it marks the complex simultaneity of the present.) The relation therefore will have already been established. In order to avoid the risk of reducing this relation to a unity and thus of essentializing it, it will be necessary to articulate, perhaps rearticulate, the relation – and thus relations – in terms of specific ontologico-temporal concatenations, as opposed to an undifferentiated and thus an as-yet-to-be-determined, though necessarily singular, being and time.<sup>11</sup> It would follow from this rearticulation that posing the question of time is, at the same time, to pose the question of existence. It is here that a digression is essential. One of the ways of this digression will bring into play elements of a philosophical stance that gives centrality to what will henceforth be described as a differential ontology.<sup>12</sup> It goes without saying that it is the sense of ontology that needs to be clarified.

The traditional problems posed by the location of the centrality of ontology are, firstly, that time comes to be excluded, and, secondly, that the ontological is thought either in terms of singularity or at the very least as a limit concept such that events could be posited independently of ontologico-temporal concerns. It is not the case that these problems are to be overcome either by an act of sublation or even one of transgression. It is rather that they both mark an inadequate conception or understanding of ontology. It is one bounded by the necessary presence of a necessary unity within conceptions of Being, i.e., where Being itself is unified such that it does not admit of either internal diversity or diremption. Furthermore, not only must Being involve an internal unity, it must, in order that it be thought, be itself a unity, i.e., exist without external relations and determinations. This latter conception will be the case even in those instances in which this presence – Being as unity – is not presented as

such. This twofold necessity demands not just an origin that comprises being at the origin, it also involves an ontology that is always already a unity. The possibility of a plurality, including the possibility of overdetermination will, as a consequence, always be parasitic upon the original unity of the event; the event as original unity. Plurality and difference emerge, therefore, as no more than tropes always dependent upon a pre-existent unity.

The event presented in this way will be complete unto itself. The reason for this completion is that the event 'is' in its being - being by forming - its own completion. While it is not a universal in the sense that it is opposed to particulars, the event, thus construed, is nonetheless a self-referring universal in that it excludes difference from within itself and generates a philosophical task in which it must be thought in its unity as a singular event. (Heidegger's formulation in *Zeit und Sein* of thinking Being 'ohne Rücksicht' ['without relation'] to either beings or metaphysics is an example of such a philosophical strategy.<sup>13</sup>) Within it difference is an after-effect, even if it is deemed to have occurred 'prior' to thinking Being as such. Difference in this sense would obscure the thinking of Being. If, in contradistinction to this presentation of both the event and the event of difference, difference is taken as original and not as the after-work of unity, then despite the radical nature of this move, it will not give rise to either the abandoning of ontology or the relativizing of Being. Such conclusions would be no more than the countermoves demanded by the promulgation of the necessity of a necessary unity. The positing of unity is not countered by an op-positing. Rather than either denial or relativity emerging as the result of this 'contrary' though not oppositional move, there will be a shift in that which is taken to be central. The substitution, however, is not one for one. The initial plurality of both modes of being, as well as the event, will from now on involve a differential ontology. (Remembering, of course, the difficulties that will always be attached to any use of the term 'initial.') Time and existence, therefore, will need to be understood as anoriginally plural. The anoriginal is a term used to designate an ontological and temporal differential plurality at the origin.

One direct result of such an understanding is the impossibility of positioning a differential ontology within the Heideggerian distinction between *Sein* and *seinde*; i.e., Heideggerian ontological difference as initially formulated in *Being and Time*. The importance of this latter Heideggerian distinction is that it generates a specific mode of philosophical questioning. The mode enjoined will be held in abeyance. A different conception of the philosophical task will come to the fore. Here the anoriginal will be linked to time. It designates, as part of a differential ontology, an original irreducibility. The difference in question - the difference that in a strict sense is the irreducible rather than simply

entailing irreducibility – involves different modes of being and thus different ontologico-temporal concatenations. These concatenations are the sites of, and are sited in, differing relations to presence and modes of being present. The question of presence, the plurality within being present, is of fundamental significance for psychoanalysis. It becomes, for example, a way by which to account for the interplay of the topographical and economic differences between the unconscious and the conscious. The presence of one within the other means that there are, at any one moment in time, i.e., any date, two irreducible modes of being present. As presence becomes the site of irreducibility, this will mean that presence can no longer be absolutely present to itself. And yet this does not preclude either the specific determination of the present or such a determination at the present. Presence returns within and as the pragma.

The anoriginal marks the possibility of the event being either potentially or actually plural, which, to characterize it in the negative, will mean that the event will always lack an essential unity. (Within the framework of translation, what could be said to be lacking is an already given semantic and interpretive finitude, if not singularity, of the source text.) It is thus that there is no unity to be recovered, no task of thinking the origin as such, since the origin, now the anorigin, is already that which resists the move to a synthetic unity. Any unity will be an after-effect. Such after-effects are comprised of given determinations, interpretations or translations. This determinate after-event is the pragma; the reworked singular as the citation within the site of a continual reworking and within which this continuity of work is itself sited but only a citation. The necessity of the pragma is inescapable. The mistake is to posit an exclusive relation between it and the 'origin.' (Relation here can take the form of, for example, identity, causality.) The pragma's presence, its mode of being present must generate a different response to the question of knowledge. The event – that which is anoriginally plural – cannot be known as such, because it cannot be said to exist *as such*. This will not mean that each claim is provisional, for the power of the provisional lies in the possibility of an eventual or at least an idealized realization or actualization of knowledge. Knowledge works within the unity or homology demanded by the identity between a source text and translation; or between an object of interpretation and mode of interpretation, etc. It is rather that what is at play here is the active presence of judgment operating in the place of knowledge. The homological will cede its place to the heterological.

Here what emerges with, and within, the posited centrality of a differential ontology is the possibility of rethinking time – the time of interpretation and translation – beyond the trap opened by the interplay of *arché* and *telos*. It is within this trap that the *arché* is the origin. The point from which a beginning is made. It is thus the point back to which

it will always be possible to go in order to trace the effectuation that is the movement towards the goal; a movement inexorably teleological. The point of departure is given. Fixed within an ontology of stasis, it is the purported pure and singular event. The movement away and the movement back obtain their conditions of possibility from a conception of time as sequential continuity. The origin or source, as given, means that any departure from it can always be evaluated – if evaluation is needed – by recourse back to the origin. This is, of course, the movement occasioned by sequential continuity. The possibility of evaluation is premised upon the already present existence of a homological relation between origin and consequence. The homological relation at work here is often presented in terms of causality. It is, for example, only the identification of the cause that gives rise to the possibility of evaluation. As will be seen, this is the model adopted by Breuer and Freud in a joint paper on hysterical phenomena written in 1893.

Within this purview, the time of translation would be that which is carried over through time from the source text to the translated text. The source or origin, in order to be carried over, must be such that its unity as a source is not impaired in the act of translation. This must be the case in order that the translation remain faithful. The possibility of recourse to the origin is itself only a viable move if the origin is articulated within an ontological similitude where the presence of the Same means that it – the origin – can come to be repeated, more or less faithfully. While fidelity is always a matter of degree, in this instance the ‘degree’ is structured by the ideal of pure translation, namely absolute commensurability. This is the ideal within the work of homology. Underpinning ontological similitude, the reign of the Same, and the origin’s capacity to function as the source of evaluation, is the necessary impossibility that the origin might be, itself, a translation. It is this possibility that has to be excluded, if an infinite regress is to be avoided. Once the trap, opened by the interplay of *arché* and *telos*, is closed, what will emerge is that it is precisely this possibility that can never be excluded. Moreover, it is a possibility that is inherent within psychoanalysis and thus can come to be thought, in part, within its terminology. Furthermore, it is this possibility that occasions its own reformulation in terms of the ontology and temporality of *Nachträglichkeit*.

Time within psychoanalysis is signaled in titles (e.g. ‘Analysis Terminable and Interminable’), though more profoundly in strategies. However, time is more correctly understood in relation to the impossible possibility of the singular event having the function of an *arché*. That this paradoxical state is never satisfactorily resolved within the corpus of Freud’s writing is signaled by Laplanche and Pontalis in their argument that

In the notion of the original fantasy come to be joined what can be called the desire [*le désir*] of Freud to find the rock of the event [*le roc de l'événement*] . . . and the need [*l'exigence*] to found the structure of the fantasy on something other than the event.<sup>14</sup>

The identification of the paradoxical interplay of 'le désir' and 'l'exigence' is given detailed elaboration by Laplanche and Pontalis in *Fantasme originaire, Fantasmès des origines, Origines du fantasme*. Rather than focus on this interplay, emphasis will be given to the temporal considerations to which it gives rise. Time, here, involves the necessity of a philosophical elaboration.

The event as the source/origin/'roc' of the fantasy is a possibility which, even though it may only permeate Freud's writings in terms of a 'desire,' and while it is perhaps more properly placed in the writings of Breuer, nonetheless underlies the strategy of their joint 1893 paper 'On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: A Preliminary Communication.'<sup>15</sup> Here they write of the event in terms of its being a 'precipitating cause.' It is the event and the role of the event as cause which comes to be forgotten. The practice of analysis which is given by this conception of the event becomes the attempted overcoming of this forgetting. Moreover, it is often a forgetting that is compounded by a subsequent forgetting of the having forgotten. The strategy of hypnosis is structured around the lost single event: the event thus construed is itself impervious to any subsequent reworking. It does not resist it, it is rather that it is presented as resistant to it. The singularity of the event precludes reworking because any reworking would mean that it was produced, reproduced, again and for the first time. The logic of forgetting and retrieval will have given way to the logic of the again and anew. Furthermore, hypnosis as cure, and hence the initial understanding of hysteria, is based on a particular structure; one which is articulated in terms of a specific ontologico-temporal concatenation. It is this structure that must be sketched in greater detail.

As a point of departure there are three fundamental elements that ought to be identified. The first element is the forgotten experience or 'precipitating cause.' The cause is an event in time. Time here involves the date of the event and the place of that event – the dated event – within the temporality of sequential continuity, i.e., chronology. In addition, it is a construal of time in which events occur and can be dated as such, and moreover it is one from which any event can be recovered. The second element is the causal relation between the event and the hysteria. The third is the particular presentation of the cure. The cure involves a twofold recognition. On the one hand, there is the recognition of the event itself as itself. On the other, there is the recognition that the connection between event and symptom is causal. These interrelated

points are expressed by Breuer in one of his contributions to the *Studies on Hysteria* in the following way. (The extent to which Breuer's formulations were fully endorsed by Freud, or even consistent with other formulations in the text as a whole, is a question that is yet to be resolved.)

We may reverse the dictum 'cessante causa cessat effectus' (when the cause ceases the effect ceases) and conclude from these observations that the determining process (i.e., the recollection of it) continues to operate for years - not indirectly, through a chain of intermediate causal links, but as a directly releasing cause - just as a psychical pain that is remembered in waking consciousness still provokes a lachrymal secretion long after the event.<sup>16</sup>

The time through which these elements pass is, as has been indicated, that of a sequential continuity that has been disrupted by forgetting. Time and existence here work to create the following logic. (Once again what is at stake is the presence of this logic, not its viability.) The break with, though also within, continuity occasions the need for treatment because the symptom's cause has been forgotten. The temptation to view this as a case of displacement must be resisted, since displacement leaves a trace. The work of displacement is present in (perhaps as) the symptom. Here there is a different economy at work. The symptom's cause has been completely removed. There is therefore no trace, not even the trace of the removal itself. The symptom opens onto an absence which must be filled. At the same time, however, it is the temporality of sequential continuity that provides the treatment's conditions of possibility. The tear has established a false continuity which demands and sanctions the creation, via the overcoming of forgetting, of the true sequence. The tear in time can be repaired and the forgotten scar erased. This is only possible because the event, the experience, took place. It happened. Its occurrence was placed in time. The place, once forgotten, and the singular event, no longer announced, can now sanction their own reincorporation back into time. The event is marked and marks the purity of its existence. Static, it bears itself as the 'precipitating cause.' The event demands an ontology of stasis and can only be seen as itself when enacted within one. Its singularity is articulated therein. This means that any return to the event must yield the event as it actually was. The event itself can never be the site of an interest, an investment or a reworking. If any of these were to take place, it would mean that the event which returned would have been rendered other than itself. Its return would deny the self-identity demanded by the logic which is operative within it. Homology would have become impossible. The return, therefore, must be one in which it - the event - returned as itself. If the strategy of hypnosis and the early conception of hysteria are to be at all viable, the event, the event as



forgotten and the event now remembered, must be one and the same. In sum, at work here is a conception of repetition in which what comes to be repeated is always one and the same. A repetition without difference dictated by the reign of the Same. It must be added that this movement which is governed and maintained by Sameness is also at play when there is a symbolization of the 'precipitating cause.' This is clear from their presentation of the case of Elisabeth von R, and in particular from the manner of her purported cure.<sup>17</sup>

The full force of Freud's famous claim in the letter to Fleiss of 21 September 1897, that 'I no longer believe in my neurotica',<sup>18</sup> will only come into play once it is seen as demanding a conception of time and existence that is situated beyond the oscillations within sequential continuity, where events come to be placed as 'precipitating causes.' There is more at stake in Freud's claim than the mere abandoning of a simple belief. What has been given up gives way to a different movement and thus to another event. It is this resituating – this dis-placement – that, firstly, is marked by the term *Nachträglichkeit* and, secondly, is in part made possible by the theory of sexuality.

What is curiously absent from the *Studies on Hysteria*, though perhaps less so from Freud's final contribution, 'The Psychotherapy of Hysteria,' is the recognition that hysteria in addition to having a cause must also have a series of preconditions. In other words, even though the subject is capable of hysteria, there are no systematic reasons given in the *Studies on Hysteria* for the possibility of hysteria. Why hysteria? There is no more than, in a given case, e.g. the rudeness of Elisabeth von R's husband, the identification of the hysteria's cause. What is provided by these early studies is a history rather than an archaeology. This is the argument advanced by Laplanche, using a Foucauldian vocabulary, in *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis* (p. 58). History in this sense is no more than the movement of chronology and the consequent locating and relocating of dated events. This movement is itself only possible within a particular conception of time. The movement away from both history and teleology is not necessarily towards archaeology in Foucault's sense, but rather towards a different understanding of time and existence. Within this understanding the event will emerge as a complex. In other words, the departure from teleology and the temporality of sequential continuity will involve releasing any retention of the event as originally singular. The singular will become the pragma; i.e., a trope of complexity, singularity as an after-effect that cites the complexity. The event will emerge as that which has already involved a complex and which is thus already a complex. It is within the terms set by this complexity that translation can come to be introduced. The event as anoriginally complex, a complex that no longer depends on an initial simplicity,

means that the event has, as will be suggested, the same status as a translation.

The explanatory model within most texts of this period is for the greater part inadequate when viewed in relation to the larger psychoanalytic project. The question of adequacy and inadequacy is always difficult. It is, however, a difficulty that is compounded by Freud's unpublished work of 1895, 'A Project for a Scientific Psychology,' for this text contains elements that have recently been retrieved for psychoanalysis. Nonetheless, absent from the vast majority of the models was the recognition of the constitution of the subject as gendered. In other words, it was no sexuality as such - having a gender - but the theory of sexuality - being gendered - that was absent. Missing from these texts was any conception of the subject as always already being gendered.

In subsequent texts, the positioning of the subject, its being gendered, is played out in relation to the work of the Oedipal complex. In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud deals with the problem of origins and the origins of sexuality by arguing that children

bring germs of sexual activity with them into the world, that they already enjoy sexual satisfaction when they begin to take nourishment and they persistently seek to repeat the experience in the familiar activity of thumb sucking.<sup>19</sup>

As the passage indicates, these 'germs' need to be understood in relation to the drives. The drives when situated in the individual, here the infant, can only be viewed as at work within the infant's situation. Consequently, not only must the process of being gendered refer to this situation, it is also a situation that cannot be dominated by the infant, nor moreover is it exclusive to the infant itself. In it the infant becomes the site of the projection of adult unconscious fantasies at the same time as it moves from self-gratification to auto-eroticism. Before returning to the 'Project' it is essential to pursue the interplay of unconscious fantasy and the auto-erotic.

Laplanche and Pontalis<sup>20</sup> describe the emergence of auto-eroticism as involving a break in the link between sexuality and a natural object and its subsequent connection to a hallucinated object. Consequently, there is an experience of the 'original satisfaction,' though this time it takes place 'in the absence of the real object.' At the same time, therefore, as this is the 'origin' of auto-eroticism, it is the 'origin' of fantasy. This original situation, this site, becomes the place of a number of different activities. The difference in question does not pertain to that which is mutually exclusive, but to the interactive. The site generates questions for the infant, sustains the adult's unconscious fantasies, is the 'origin' of the infant's fantasies and finally is itself traversed by the work of the Oedipal complex. Though the time involved is complex, these activities are co-

present. This situation, this complex, has the same structure as the event of translation. It is, perhaps, an anoriginal translation.

In relation to the 'Project,' however, it is the connection between sexuality, and hence this site, and *Nachträglichkeit* that makes this text of interest. It is, of course, the case of Emma that is central. It is essential to note how Freud analyses her fear of going into shops alone.

In the shop the two assistants were laughing: this laughing aroused (unconsciously) the memory of the shopkeeper. Indeed, the situation had yet another similarity [to the earlier one]: she was once again in the shop alone. Together with the shopkeeper she remembered his grabbing her clothes; but since then she had reached puberty. The memory aroused what it was certainly not able to at the time, a sexual release, which was transformed into anxiety. With this anxiety she was afraid that the shop assistant might repeat the assault, and she ran away.<sup>21</sup>

What is taking place here is a description of the eroticization or libidinization of the original situation, an occurrence situated within the effect of deferred action. The original event is thus no longer the same as itself. The effect of the present on the past is to cause a repetition of the 'event' within which something new is taking place. What, however, is new? How is the new to be understood?

The temporal scheme here is central. The difficulty is the identification, or at least the suggested identification of sexuality with puberty, thereby effacing, though perhaps only in part, the later distinction drawn by Freud between the sexual and the genital. It is possible to go further and suggest that the theory of sexuality understood as a theory of gender construction would have meant that even the original event was not an origin, but itself already a translation. It will be necessary to explain why this is the case. In the subsequent discussion of the assault having an effect but not as it was experienced, Freud notes the following:

Here we have a case of the memory arousing an effect which it did not arouse as an experience because meantime the change [brought about] in puberty had made possible a different understanding of what was remembered. . . . Now this case is typical of repression in hysteria. We invariably find that a memory is repressed [*verdrängt*] which has only become a trauma by deferred action [*die nur nachträglichkeit zum Trauma geworden ist*].<sup>22</sup>

Now while there may be terminological problems at play here, it is worth comparing this early passage, one incorporated according to the rubrics of the *Standard Edition* in the 'pre-psychoanalytic' writings, to a much later, perhaps even 'psychoanalytic,' passage:

it was no longer a question of the sexual experiences a particular individual had had in his childhood, but rather of his reaction to those experiences - of whether he had reacted to them by repression or not.<sup>23</sup>

At stake in both instances is the reaction. The movement from the present to the past yielding a re-presentation. The change that takes place concerns the movement of re-presentation. The presence of this movement means that representation is not to be understood in terms of the disappearance and retrieval of images, but as given within a logic of repetition; here it takes place in terms of a re-presentation articulated within the logic of the again and the anew.

In his discussion of this section of the 'Project,' Laplanche draws the following important conclusions in regard to the operation of *Nachträglichkeit*, the 'theory of deferred action':

This theory postulates that nothing can be inscribed in the human unconscious except in relation to two events which are separated from one another in time by a moment of maturation that allows the subject to react in two ways to an initial experience or the memory of that experience. Freud describes the first moment in terms of fright [*Schreck*] or fright neurosis: the unprepared subject is confronted with a highly meaningful sexual action, but cannot take in its significance. If it remains latent, the memory is in itself neither pathogenic nor traumatic. It becomes pathogenic and traumatic when it is revived by a second scene which can be associated with it. But, because the subject can now react in a different way, it is the memory itself, and not the new scene, which functions as a source of traumatic or autotraumatic energy.<sup>24</sup>

What is signaled in this passage is the complexity of the event. An initial occurrence which, because it cannot be incorporated, remains latent. A later occurrence causes the first to be reworked. It is now relived and thus can become what Laplanche describes as a 'source of traumatic or autotraumatic energy.' The reworking and reliving are the marks of repetition. What comes to be reworked, and thereby comes to be repeated, is an occurrence that generates the event of the co-presence of sameness and difference. In order that the event include difference, it is essential that it is the same occurrence that is repeated. (The same, here, because it includes memory and fantasy, means that the actual historical or empirical status of the event is not of logical significance though it may, in a given case, be of central psychological significance.) Repetition is therefore marked by the presence of the ineliminable necessity of difference. Reworking will always generate an origin or 'source' that is the same and different. One whose lack of unity in resisting synthesis will

therefore, and by its very nature, occasion analysis. *Nachträglichkeit*, in this instance, has a specific sense. It refers to the reworking of an occurrence by another such that the potential of the first is released and comes to form a complex event. It thereby accounts for the presence of an inscription into the unconscious. Occurrence, as Laplanche makes clear, can mean the experience, the memory of that experience, or even just a memory where the precise nature and hence reality of the occurrence is open to question. The 'source' identified by Laplanche is a complex event. It is the co-presence of sameness and difference. The immediate question that emerges here is how does the second occurrence occur? Is there no more than chance at play here?

In *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* Laplanche notes in regard to Emma that 'there was . . . a seduction on the part of the little girl, since she returned to the shop, clearly in order to submit herself once again to the same type of gesture.'<sup>25</sup> He goes on to make a further suggestion that introduces an additional problematic element. Namely, it is possible that 'from the first [*dès la première fois*] she went to the shop moved [*mue*] by some obscure sexual premonition [*pressentiment*].'<sup>26</sup> The first occurrence is thereby removed from the realm of pure contingency. Contingency may pertain to the specificity of the occurrence, but not the nature and possibility of the occurrence itself. Laplanche's use of the expression '*dès la première fois*' can be interpreted as indicating that the possibility of the occurrence is, in a formal sense, already preordained. It is both true to say that Emma is in her situation, and that Emma is, in her situation. Contingency and necessity form Emma's situation. It is a situation, therefore, that is at the same time the one where she is found and the one in which she finds herself. Neither of these findings can ever be absolute, in fact, certain of them may be misplaced or misfound. Her situation, therefore, does not comprise a site where her destiny is final; moreover, it is not the site of mastery. The finality and the mastery in question refer to a control over the site as well as self-mastery; the later being the self in site. Emma can never be at one with her site – she can never have her self in sight – and never be at one with herself within it. Indeed, the self is always misplaced or misfound if it is thought to have itself in sight. Emma's situation, therefore, repeats the situation of the infant. Because this repetition places *Nachträglichkeit* within another situation, it comes to be provided with a greater extension. Prior to giving more content to this extension, a final, though nonetheless significant, aspect of these present concerns needs to be noted. Its significance lies in its forcing a reconsideration of any response to the question, what is an occurrence? The problem is knowing what it is that is occurring.

The need for this reconsideration stems from Laplanche's suggestion that Emma was actively involved in her own seduction.<sup>27</sup> The activity in question is not intentional, it is therefore not played out on the level of

consciousness. Its only conscious presence would be in terms of its own disavowal. What this involvement entails, however, is that each occurrence - the putative original singular event - brings with it something in addition to the occurrence itself. It is this addition that would seem to suggest that the occurrence is already a type of complex event. Furthermore, it is the 'something else,' when taken in conjunction with the occurrence, that allows for the occurrence to be inscribed within the logic of repetition. In other words, there could never have been a pure simple occurrence. What occurred formed part of a complex event. The complexity is, however, never an object for a subject. Part of what is at work within the event are those unconscious elements which, as has been noted, will allow the occurrence to be reworked. The radical consequence of this situation is that the original complex event, which was thought to be no more than an occurrence that comes to be repeated, is now to be understood as itself marked by its own irreducibility. It can never be at one with itself. What allows the occurrence to be repeated is its existence as a complex event. It is, of course, precisely this which allows a work to be translated. A translation does not unify a complex event, thereby rendering it singular or self-identical. Translation is only possible because of the complexity. The translation in its complexity will at the same time be a further complex event and a determinate object, one and the other. It has a twofold existence: not only are translation and interpretation linked, the source is in addition turned into a translation. It is this conclusion - one that enjoins repetition - that must be related to the work of *Nachträglichkeit*. There are therefore at least two reasons for trying to extend an understanding of the temporality of *Nachträglichkeit*. The first, as has already been suggested, concerns the importance of this concept within psychoanalysis itself. The second involves the formal link between *Nachträglichkeit* and repetition.

One of the references to which allusion has already been made is to Freud's claim, made in another letter to Fleiss, 9 June 1898, that in C. F. Meyer's short story 'Gustav Adolfs Page' there are two instances of this process, or to be more exact: 'In *Gustav Adolfs Page* finde ich den Gedanken der *Nachträglichkeit* zweimal.'<sup>28</sup> The action is represented in terms of thought or ideas, rather than as a process. This apparently problematic presentation needs to be pursued. The story involves deception by disguise, and even though it thereby forms part of a well-known genre, the story raises the larger and more general problem of the mask and therefore of the origin. Both representations of *Nachträglichkeit* within the story concern the realization, and its consequences, that things are not as they seem. Two discoveries occur. The first is that Christel, the page, was in fact a girl in boy's clothing. The second is that the tutor to the King's child was not a Protestant, but a Jesuit set on the task of the

child's secret conversion. Perhaps it should be added that both these eventualities were always possible. Deception, especially in the latter case, could never be completely precluded. Indeed, strenuous steps were taken on both sides of the divide – behind and in front of the disguise – in order that the façade of authenticity be maintained.

Why and how do these examples involve *Nachträglichkeit*? The immediate response concerns what was uncovered. It is not simply that the page and the tutor were discovered to be something other than they seemed. Furthermore, it is not simply that the kiss that revealed the boy to be a girl caused, but only in this instance, the seduction to fail. It is rather that the connections, the subsequent discoveries, turned the presentation of the tutor and the page – their being at the present – into contemporary sources of anxiety. In other words, they have been re-presented. Once again, the representation does not involve two different images, but a reworking such that the effect of the present on the past turns their occurrence – their existence as page and tutor – into that to which a traumatic response is possible. Due to the work of *Nachträglichkeit* there can be no return to what they had been and yet what there had been still lingers, inhering in what there now is. What now is is, on a formal level at least, the interplay of sameness and difference; an interplay marked by both irreducibility and dependence. There is a repetition – the tutor is still the tutor, etc. – but it is one in which something new has occurred. The enactment of the process cannot be represented as such, it can only be noted, hence 'den Gedanken der *Nachträglichkeit*.'

Understanding the temporality of *Nachträglichkeit* will turn on developing this particular conception of repetition. And yet because of the closure of any divide between repetition and reworking, this example will allow for the presentation of *Nachträglichkeit* in a more generalized form. The generality can be developed in relation, firstly, to Freud's description of the analyst as translator and, secondly, his construal of the conscious presentation as a translation. The striking question which arises here is what is it that would have to occur for translation not to be at work within psychoanalysis? In other words, could translation ever not figure within psychoanalysis?

The always already present presence of translation is evident, firstly, in Freud's description of the analyst as translator and then, secondly, when the presentation to consciousness, the process, and thus the conscious presentation are taken as translations. The problematic nature of these descriptions is clear from the fact that in the case of the conscious presentation there is no straightforward source text. The difficulties inherent in psychoanalysis's translation is succinctly captured in a passage from *An Autobiographical Study* in which Freud suggests that the manifest content of a dream is

a façade [*eine Fassade*] which would start as a starting point for the associations but not for the interpretation.<sup>29</sup>

What, however, is a façade? The façade is not a deception. The covering or face need not feign. Neither need be a feint. Nevertheless, the dictate of convention is that the façade works to hide. It covers. The façade opens itself up to the effects of its own associations. The façade is linked to the mask, and both are related to the work of mimesis. Mimesis, the façade, and the mask are involved in the opposition between inside and outside. In all these links and interconnections – associations – there are a number of important questions. What takes place behind the mask? Is truth hidden behind the mask, concealed, waiting to be revealed? Furthermore, is the truth of the façade given when what is effaced can, finally, come to be faced? (It may be the case that holding back the sway of convention – an evitage of tradition's work – may unmask the mask beyond masking. Does the mask's redemption save by abandoning?)

A façade is a type of translation. The question posed above could have been posed with equal cogency and force in connection to a translation, even to a specific translation. In relation to the dream, what is known is that the work of condensation and displacement accounts, in part, for the form taken by the manifest content. Their work does not comprise either an origin or source. It is not what is, or has been, translated. Even in this short passage, Freud's use of the term 'façade' is given greater specification. The 'façade' is not, in itself, the object of interpretation. It only comes to figure within the construction of such an object when it is taken in relation to the association to which it will give rise. The object of interpretation becomes the interplay of the manifest content, the associations, and whatever other material that is provided by the analyst and which would have already been provided by the analysand. There is a curious temporality in the process of interpretation. It is a temporality marked by the play of tenses and constrained by the sequential rules of narrative, even though it is not reducible to them. Here is another instance of an irreducible figuring.

The starting-point, the translation, is reworked within the field of associations to which it gives rise. Each association does itself become the site of a further reworking. It must be added that there are associations which, potentially at least, are always to come. The future is to come and yet its projection can never be absolutely futural. (Once again, this is the problem of the singular event.) The future which is linked to the effect of the present on the past, a past that is present, thereby questioning the use of simple temporal divisions, is in addition implicated in the 'façade.' The 'façade,' in order that it be interpreted, must be reworked by another occurrence, an association, that takes place after it. The translation becomes translated. The translation is the source of its own subsequent



translation. The generalized effect of the movement from translation to translation means that the temporal process marked, perhaps named by, *Nachträglichkeit*, becomes the temporality of both analysis and interpretation. The move from 'façade' via association to interpretation is not from the past to the future. It is a movement articulated within the logic of the again and the anew.

In their *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse* Laplanche and Pontalis, in the entry that deals with *Nachträglichkeit* ('Après Coup'), argue that it is not 'the lived [*le vécu*] in general' that is reworked, but that element which,

at the moment where it had been lived, had not been able to be integrated into a significant context [*un contexte significatif*].<sup>30</sup>

While they go on to argue that the model for this movement is the 'traumatic event,' it is perhaps possible to suggest that the act of integration is a reworking and a repetition that characterizes the work of psychoanalysis itself. There are two preconditions which must be met in order that the 'façade' may come to have a 'significant context.' The first is the recognition that the façade does not mask its own truth and which, therefore, could be recovered by looking or searching back beyond or behind the façade. The second is that the context, in not being given in and of itself, can only be provided by an additional occurrence. In this instance, it is provided by the associations. It must be remembered that the associations stem from the façade. Repeated here, therefore, is the conclusion that was reached in the earlier discussion of the nature of the occurrence. The initial occurrence was not a singular event. It contained that which occasioned its repetition. The façade resists singularity in that its self-presentation always incorporates something in addition to itself.<sup>31</sup> It is this addition which allows for the associations and thus reworking of the façade in the generation of the object of interpretation. This object is, as has been noted, the interrelationship between the 'façade,' the associations and other and future associations which will in turn generate the memory of other façades. One of the consequences of the role of memory is that it will complicate any attempt to establish an easy distinction between all subsequent associations and any future façades.

The 'façade' opens up a much larger area of philosophical inquiry. One that has only been approached in a halting way hitherto. The 'façade' puts in play the problem of the mask. From the 'larvatus prodeo' of Descartes<sup>32</sup> to Kierkegaard's use of name as mask and Nietzsche's preoccupation with masking, the mask figures as a significant moment within philosophical reflection. The problem concerns the status of the masked. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche presents the stakes of masking thus: 'Whatever is profound loves masks: what is most profound even hates image and parable.'<sup>33</sup> It is these two levels of profundity that are of interest. What they raise is the question of how the mask is to be

understood. If the mask is understood as masking a reality, it becomes a surface, even a deceptive surface. The problem here is that a denial of this position, even one whose intention was the affirmation of the mask, may turn out to do no more than reduce the mask to a mere surface, a surface with no depth. The surface, therefore, would provide its own truth because there was only ever the work of surfaces. These two possibilities repeat the either/or of good and evil. They repeat it without addition. Moving from the purity of surface to the depth of truth engenders a self-confirming, though nonetheless nihilistic, oscillation. What emerges from Freud's façade is a way of construing the surface – the face that surfaces – beyond this oscillation. The first step is taking the façade as a translation, i.e., as a surface with depth.<sup>34</sup> The unmasking of masking reveals it to be a masked version of the problem of translation. The mask and the façade, because they both deny closure, reopen the stakes of the evaluation of translation. It has become an evaluation that is informed by translation itself.

In quoting Masson's translation of Freud's letter to Fleiss, it was noted that he translated 'heisst' as 'known.' How is this translation to be judged? The answer to this question lies in part in its own formulation. The question, as is the case with translation, both in terms of generality and specificity, involves the problematic relationship between judgment and epistemology. Perhaps one of the most precise expressions of classical epistemology is found in Descartes' claim, made in the *Discourse on Method*, that each 'thing' (*chose*) has a truth, and that once it is known, then that exhausts all that can be known about that 'thing.'<sup>35</sup> It is clear that this conception of the absolute nature of classical epistemology still figures in those positions which, while not skeptical about truth per se, see its realization as only an ideal. The implicit formulation of subject and object that is at work here needs to be expressed in terms of homology. What Descartes' position envisages is a homological relation between object and knowledge; a relation without residue or remainder. (It is on a formal level the same relation that occurs within the classical conception of the sign.) The viability of such a position depends upon the object being either self-identical or admitting of a finite and knowable set of delimitations. It is thus that their complete representation is envisaged as possible since they can be represented in their totality. Truth posed within the frame of classical epistemology is inextricably linked to the problematic of representation.

Translation, especially when it comes to be translated in order that the problem of the event can be seen to figure, resists any incorporation into classical epistemology. The temporality of *Nachträglichkeit*, a temporality whose extension incorporates interpretation, works outside the possibility of self-identity or epistemological exhaustion. The inscription of the futural in the complex event, of the potential for the future into the

present, forms one of the reasons why the event can never be self-identical. However, this does not militate against the existence of specific determinations, interpretations, translations, claims, etc. In other words, what cannot be precluded is the possibility of the pragma, for its presentation will always take in a present that can be dated. It is rather that the various forms of the pragma cannot be evaluated within the purview of classical epistemology. In the opening of homology, the heterological intrudes, but not as its opposite, a mere counter, but as the potential that was always present within the desire for homology. The heterological will demand a response that while taking the given as central – e.g. accepting the ‘façade’ as a point of departure – will occasion its evaluative dispersal by bringing conditions of possibility, associations, and consequences into play. Here the event sanctions the encounter between the transcendental, the interpretive, and the political as the site of judgment.

It is at this point – one presenting while masking a conclusion – that it may be possible to return to the initial failure of translation; i.e., the problem of squaring ‘a failure of translation’ and ‘un refusment de traduction.’ The original ‘Versagung’ is neither failed, if it is translated as ‘un refusment,’ nor moreover is its force refused, if it is translated by ‘failure.’ The difference between the two is twofold. In the first place, it resides, as has already been indicated, in the different consequences that each demand and the different associations to which they give rise. The consequences will serve as part of what is at stake in the critical judgment of any translation. In the second place, the difference resides in ‘Versagung’; in the word ‘Versagung’ as marking a complex event. If this is the case, then it can be concluded that the word, as a complex event, will always be that which contains the potential – be it actualized or not – for what can be called semantic differential plurality. Any attempt to fix a meaning, translation, interpretation by its inscription into homology and classical epistemology will always fail, for what can never be precluded is the futural possibility – a possibility that defines by opening up the future – for a different site of translation, etc. It is, of course, a possibility already inscribed in the present, at the present. The future as becoming enacts an operative and effective relationship between the past and the present. The life of the work involves, as Walter Benjamin argues, its afterlife. The same is true, but differently, for the event.

## NOTES

- 1 This paper takes up and continues an analysis of the interplay between psychoanalysis, philosophy and translation that was begun in *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989). See in particular chapter 5.

- 2 It is interesting to note James Strachey's footnote in the *Standard Edition* (SE) that accompanies the reference to *Nachträglichkeit* in 'A Project for a Scientific Psychology': 'The whole idea had the ground cut from under it by the discovery a year or two later of infantile sexuality and the recognition of the persistence of unconscious instinctual impulses' (SE, I: 356). The problem here is what is meant by the expression 'whole idea.' Not only is it clear that *Nachträglichkeit* plays a fundamental role in the analysis of the Wolf Man (indeed, its importance is in fact conceded by Strachey), it is also the case that the temporality it engenders forms a constitutive part of the work of psychoanalysis. *Nachträglichkeit* is open to its own translation.
- 3 Sigmund Freud, *Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse* (London: Imago, 1950), p. 187. The full context is the following: 'Die Versagung der Übersetzung, das ist das, was klinisch "Verdrängung" heisst. Motiv derselben ist stets eine Unlustentbindung, die durch Übersetzung entstehen würde, als ob diese Unlust eine Denkstörung hervorriefe, die die Übersetzungsarbeit nicht gestattet.' The inverted commas placed around *Verdrängung* must be noted. Their most immediate effect is to put into question any automatic commensurability between 'Verdrängung' and *Verdrängung*. The relation is therefore one to be negotiated. The negotiation will, however, always defer to the future. The deference will not preclude the necessity of the present. What would it mean to obviate presence? Indeed, it is this necessity of the present and presentation that will come to be articulated in terms of the 'pragma.' See the reference in note 9.
- 4 *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey M. Masson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 208.
- 5 In *Psychanalyse à l'université*, 51 (1988): 405. In his recent work, Laplanche has made use of translation in order to develop his own 'foundations' for psychoanalysis. See *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, trans. David Macey (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) and 'Temporalité et traduction: Pour une remise au travail de la philosophie du temps,' *Psychanalyse à l'université*, 53 (1989): 17-35. In addition, he is general editor of the new French translation of Freud's complete works. Some of the difficulties involved in this undertaking and his 'Terminologique Raisonnée' can be found in André Bourguignon, Pierre Cotet, Jean Laplanche, and François Robert, *Traduire Freud* (Paris: PUF, 1989). It will be clear from the following that considerable importance has been attached to Laplanche's work. A number of his formulations have been adopted. I offer a more sustained reading of Laplanche in 'Laplanche and the Translation of Time,' in *Laplanche and Psychoanalysis*, ed. John Fletcher and Martin Stanton (forthcoming).
- 6 One of the intriguing issues to which this neologism gives rise is the value of etymology. 'Le refusement' can be most easily derived from the verb 'refuser.' The verb, however, does not have a straightforward etymology, indeed, it is thought to have arisen out of a confusion between two Latin verbs 'recusare' and 'refutare'; the 't' finally being elided. The irony is that 'refutare' is semantically, as opposed to etymologically, close to 'refouler.' 'Refoulement' is the term normally used to translate 'Verdrängung.' The value of etymology is therefore yet to be fixed.
- 7 François Roustang, *Psychoanalysis Never Lets Go*, trans. Ned Lukacher (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 17.
- 8 Masson, *Letters of Freud to Fliess*, p. 316.
- 9 I have tried to develop the idea of the 'pragma' in *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy*. See in particular pp. 148-9. The significant aspect of the

pragma is that it allows for specificity while at the same time refusing the necessity of a homological relation – a relation of commensurability or identity – between, for example, the object of interpretation and a specific interpretation, the source text and its translation. Furthermore, the co-presence of both the pragma and the complex event means that it is possible to think being within becoming; one within the other and therefore of a determinate being within becoming. This co-presence means a reworking of the nature of becoming. The presence of one, therefore, neither negates the presence of the other, nor entails its necessary absence.

- 10 It is this possibility, namely the identity between positing and being, that is fundamental to Fichte's approach in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. His formulation, while limited to the self ('Ich'), is as follows: 'Sich selbst setzen und Seyn sind, vom Ich gebraucht, völlig gleich' ('To posit oneself and to be are, when related to the self, completely identical'). *Fichtes Werke* vol. 1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), p. 98. It is precisely the tenuous nature of this connection and its link to Fichte's own formulation of the principle of identity that form the basis of Novalis' critique of Fichte in his *Fichte Studien*. I hope to treat this critique in greater detail elsewhere.
- 11 Here the attempt to avoid a risk is by its very nature already a risk.
- 12 For a more detailed discussion of differential ontology and the anoriginal, see my *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), in particular chapters 1 and 2.
- 13 Heidegger's precise formulation is: 'To think Being without beings means to think Being without regard to metaphysics [ohne Rücksicht auf die Metaphysik]' *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969). While Heidegger goes on to note the difficulties attached to this project, such that the project becomes the attempt to leave metaphysics to its own concerns and thereby think Being 'without regard,' it remains the case that the conditions of possibility for this undertaking are those which pertain to the possibility of the singular event. This is, of course, only to begin a reading of the 'ohne Rücksicht.'
- 14 Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis, *Fantasme originaire. Fantasmata des origines. Origines du fantasme* (Paris: Hachette, 1985), p. 45.
- 15 This paper became the first chapter of the *Studies on Hysteria* (SE, 11).
- 16 SE, 11: 221.
- 17 The problem posed by the formation of symbols has been analysed in greater detail in *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy*, pp. 120-3.
- 18 Masson, *Letters of Freud to Fliess*, p. 264.
- 19 SE, 7: 232.
- 20 Laplanche and Pontalis, *Fantasme originaire*, particularly pp. 65-74.
- 21 SE, 2: 353.
- 22 SE, 1: 354. The German text is found in Freud, *Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse*.
- 23 SE, 7: 276-7.
- 24 Jean Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, p. 112.
- 25 Jean Laplanche, *Vie et Mort en Psychanalyse* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970), p. 65.
- 26 Ibid., p. 65.
- 27 These conclusions are drawn from Laplanche's acute observations. They are not the conclusions that he has drawn himself.
- 28 The German text is found in Freud, *Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse*. An English translation is 'In "Gustav Adolph's Page" I found the idea of deferred action twice.'

- 29 *SE*, 20: 29.
- 30 Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse* (Paris: PUF, 1967), p. 34.
- 31 Another way of pursuing the presence of what here has been called the 'something else' is via Jean-Jacques Lecercle's theory of the remainder. See his *The Violence of Language* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 61–95.
- 32 For an important analysis of masking in Descartes, see Jean-Luc Nancy, *Ego Sum* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), pp. 61–95.
- 33 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966), section 40. The role of the mask and of masking in Nietzsche's work is far more detailed than has been indicated here. Nonetheless, its importance lies in its attempt to unmask masking. See, for example, section 25 of *Beyond Good and Evil*.
- 34 There is an important analogue here with the interpretation of paintings. It emerges to the extent that the canvas as surface is posited as having its truth at a depth within it. Again, the countermove is not the celebration of surface. I have tried to develop a conception of the event as involving surfaces with depth in relation to the paintings of Jackson Pollock, in 'Events with Depth: Jackson Pollock's Action Paintings,' *Art and Design*, 11–12 (1989): 30–5.
- 35 Descartes presents this argument in the Second Part of the *Discourse on Method*. While it is perhaps an elementary formulation, it still captures the aspirations of classical epistemology.

# TRANSLATION AS SIMULACRUM

*John Johnston*

For his German translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux parisiens*, published in 1923, Walter Benjamin wrote an introductory essay entitled 'The Task of the Translator' ('Aufgabe des Übersetzers'), which now stands out as a quintessentially modernist attempt to formulate a theory of translation, perhaps as *the* modernist theory of translation. It would seem, moreover, that only in the present 'post-Saussurian' period, when a diacritical theory of language can be more or less assumed, can speculation about the larger implications of Benjamin's theory take place, as recent essays by Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida and the many passing references to Benjamin's theory in Joseph Graham's anthology *Difference in Translation* all attest.<sup>1</sup> In his deconstructive reading, for example, de Man shows that Benjamin's essay is itself an example of what Benjamin's theory calls for, and in that sense is 'untranslatable.' Yet one can also argue, following Benjamin, that for that very reason it must be translated, and that in doing so one is not necessarily condemned merely to repeat and thereby remain trapped within the aporias of language to which de Man so well draws our attention. Indeed, I want to suggest that in translation a text does become a vehicle for the becoming of language, just as Benjamin asserts, but not quite in the same way or in the same terms that Benjamin provides. From this perspective it could be argued that de Man unduly substantializes the 'nihilist moment' in Benjamin's theory, especially since the latter hints at the means for 'moving through' – though perhaps not transcending – this moment.

What strikes us immediately in Benjamin's essay of course is his outright dismissal of the traditional theory of translation, which, as he puts it, is to convey 'the form and meaning of the original as accurately as possible.'<sup>2</sup> Benjamin's impugnement of the traditional theory amounts to a twofold critique, since he shows that the traditional approach is based on a naive and intellectually impoverished theory of language; and furthermore, that this necessarily puts the translator in an insoluble doublebind in which he or she must strive for 'fidelity' to either the letter or spirit of the original.<sup>3</sup> In either case, something essential is 'lost in

translation.' As Benjamin stresses, however, what is utterly singular for each particular language is the way in which it 'intends' its object (Benjamin means this in the Husserlian, phenomenological sense), and what is unreproducible in each individual literary work of art is the unity of what is intended with the way in which it is intended. Yet, rather than admit that translation is therefore impossible in principle, and thus yield to a critical commonplace of translation theory, Benjamin argues that it is precisely because they are untranslatable in the ordinary sense that some works call out for and even demand translation. In fact, for Benjamin the importance of translation lies not in the transmission of an essential meaning or content from one language to another, but in what happens to both the original and the second language as a result of translation, and therefore in what translation signifies about language taken as a whole.

The usual criterion by which a translation is measured is accuracy. But how is this accuracy to be defined? As the reproduction of exact sense or meaning? Benjamin points out that the German word *Brot* and the French word *pain* intend the same generic object ('bread'), but that the 'mode of intention' (*der Art des Meinens*) differs in the two languages; therefore the 'meaning' of the object is slightly different in the two instances.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, although there is something to be said for a translation that strives to follow the literal syntax of the original, such efforts are doomed to forfeit intelligibility. Meaning, Benjamin notes, is consequently 'served far better - and literature and language far worse - by the unrestrained license of bad translators.'

The traditional view of translation as an imitation or copy of an original text in a second language proves inadequate not only in practice, however: it also rests on a falsely static view of language. Neither the assumption that a language (even a 'dead' language) is unchanging and completely defined, nor that an individual work is complete, whole and identical to itself, holds up under scrutiny. For one thing, historical changes occur in the original language: the meanings of words change, and even idiomatic forms and expressions mutate over the years. There is also the likelihood that the 'visible' features of a writer's style will change in the eyes of posterity; seemingly obvious stylistic tendencies may become less perceptible, while those that were only immanent may become more evident or important to later generations of readers. But the real failing of traditional theory is that it neglects not only these historical factors, but, more importantly, the effects brought about by translation in both the original and the second language. Benjamin, consequently, goes so far as to state: 'Translation is so far removed from being the sterile equation of two dead languages that of all literary forms it is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the



maturing process of the original language and the birth pangs of its own.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the traditional theory also misses what for Benjamin is the true purpose of translation. Just as 'No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the listener,' he asserts at the beginning of his essay, so no translation can serve a 'transmitting function.' Instead, translation manifests the fundamental 'kinship' (*die Verwandtschaft*) of languages, and thereby allows us a glimpse of the 'pure language' (*die reine Sprache*), as Benjamin calls it, that lies 'concealed in concentrated fashion in translations.' The true significance of translation lies therefore in the expression of 'the central reciprocal relationship between languages.'

By 'kinship' Benjamin means to designate a relationship that is not historical but a priori, and that doesn't necessarily involve likeness; it rests, as he explains, 'in the intention underlying each language as a whole - an intention, however, which no single language can attain by itself but which is realized only by the totality of their intentions supplementing each other.' This totality of intentions, in which the differing modes of signification of individual languages supplement one another and are reconciled (although they never communicate), Benjamin calls 'pure language.' Benjamin associates this 'pure language' both with Mallarmé's idea of the 'supreme language' (which, according to Mallarmé, exists in the default implied by the fact of the plurality of languages), and with 'the tensionless and even silent depository of the ultimate truth which all thought strives for.' If there is a language of truth or a true language, Benjamin states, then it is this 'pure language.'

It is in view of this 'pure language' that the translator must work: instead of reproducing the meaning of the original, he or she 'must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language.' The translation will be transparent, but only in the sense that it will not 'cover the original' or 'block its light,' but will allow 'the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully.' And this effect is simultaneously carried over into the translator's language as well. The task of the translator, then, is 'to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work.' For the sake of this 'pure language,' the translator 'breaks through decayed barriers' and extends the boundaries of his own language. Citing Luther, Voss, Hölderlin, and George as exemplary German translators who have accomplished this, Benjamin offers as further confirmation of his argument the recommendation by Rudolf Pannwitz that a translator should not try to convert a foreign language into his own, but, on the

contrary, should let his own language be powerfully affected, even penetrated, by the foreign one; only thus can it be 'expanded,' 'deepened,' and even 'transformed.'

Such a view of translation, at least in its practical consequences, accords with much of twentieth-century practice. We need only point to the importance of 'translation' in Pound's revitalization of modern poetry. As Hugh Kenner notes, Pound never translates 'into' something already existing in English; on the contrary, for Pound translation was always the opportunity to make the target language say something new.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Pound's program of 'interpretative translation,' as he called it in *The Spirit of Romance*, is superseded or at least further complicated by the role translation assumes in the *Cantos*, which begin with Pound's own 'translation' of a section of Andreas Divus's Renaissance Latin translation of Homer's *Odyssey* into an 'Amurikun' idiom filtered through Anglo-Saxon verse conventions.<sup>7</sup> Or, to take another well-known case, we might consider Vladimir Nabokov's translation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, which is so literal as to require a massive commentary and interpretive apparatus in order to achieve intelligibility. 'Nabokov's translation can and indeed should be studied,' the Russian scholar Alexander Gerschenkron stated in a review essay, 'but despite all the cleverness and occasional brilliance it cannot be read.'<sup>8</sup> Whereas Pound's 'translations' are really reconstructions or re-inscriptions, intended to expand the expressive possibilities of the English language, Nabokov summarizes his own practice with the dismissive assertion that anything but the 'clumsiest literalism' is a fraud.<sup>9</sup> Yet both these approaches find justification in Benjamin's theory.

But what remains troubling in Benjamin's theory, at least in its theoretical implications, is his notion of a 'pure language.' Though related to his early *Sprachphilosophie* and to Mallarmé's notion of a supreme language, its exact status in this text of 1923 is far from clear. What makes it essential to his theory of translation? And to what, in fact and in principle, does it commit the translator as Benjamin conceives him or her?

Now I think it can be demonstrated that this notion of a 'pure language' serves a double function, or at least operates in two related ways. On the one hand, it designates a language of pure meaning and univocity unobscured by the mediation of any particular language; and, of course, in evoking an Adamite or pre-Babelian language, it takes on a mythic dimension. More specifically, it implies a theological view of language, and harks back to Benjamin's early interest, perhaps never abandoned, in the central role of an *Ursprache* within the Kabbalistic interpretation of the biblical myth of creation. Benjamin is a little more explicit about this theme when he states: 'For the great motif of integrating many tongues into one true language is at work [in transla-

tion].’ In *After Babel*, George Steiner draws attention to this Kabbalistic or mystical strain within translation theory, which, as he points out, later feeds into the more rationalized quest in modern linguistics for universals of language.<sup>10</sup> But what matters here is that this cluster of associations accounts for the messianic tone detectable in Benjamin’s essay as a whole.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, the notion of a ‘pure language’ serves Benjamin as a means by which to grasp the differential and diacritical nature of all language, and the fact that the essential nature of language (*le langage*, the French would say) only becomes visible in and through differences in particular languages (*les langues*). This point remains more oblique. Benjamin argues that the difference between languages that translation must somehow necessarily overcome cannot and should not be suppressed, for translation lives on (or in) this difference; a particular translation will be valuable according to how it alludes to or dissimulates this difference, or, more positively, reveals and accentuates it. And it is in relation to this positive sense of difference that we are to gauge an individual work’s ‘translatability.’ Maurice Blanchot, in a brief appreciative commentary on Benjamin’s essay, emphasizes this aspect of the theory when he states:

A work has the maturity and dignity to be translated only if it harbors this difference, somehow made renderable, either because in its origin the work points towards *another* language, or because it gathers in a privileged way the possibilities, present in every living language, of being different from itself and strange to itself.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, because the ‘original’ is not self-identical but holds within itself these marks of another language, whether as seeds of change present in the language at a certain state or as some more radical otherness only visible in the *dérive* of other literary works, it calls for translation to ‘translate’ – to accomplish and bring to fruition – this difference. Insofar as translation passes along this originary strangeness, it is linked to or even becomes an instrument of the becoming of language and indeed of literature itself.<sup>13</sup>

Benjamin concludes rather ambiguously. Having cited Pannwitz’s recommendation that translators should allow their own language to be transformed by the foreign or target language, he brings his essay to a close by asserting ‘the interlinear version of the Scriptures as the prototype [*das Urbild*] or ideal of all translation.’ But Benjamin’s argument here is rather curious. Holy Writ, he says, where the text is identical with truth, and language and revelation are one, is unconditionally translatable; translation is called for only because of the plurality of languages. He then proposes the following analogy: ‘Just as, in the original [that is, Holy Writ], language and revelation are one without

any tension, so the translation must be one with the original in the form of the interlinear version, in which literalness and freedom are united.' To put it another way: the 'oneness' of the original can only be rendered in translation through the textual doubling of the interlinear version.

But the introduction here of Holy Writ, it seems to me, can only be understood as a strategic move. For what mediates or comes between the citation of Pannwitz and this concluding statement is the example of Hölderlin's translation of Pindar's 'Third Pythian Ode' and Sophocles' two tragedies. Blanchot, in the essay already cited, summarizes the latter as follows:

the translations of *Antigone* and *Oedipus Rex* were almost [Hölderlin's] last works, undertaken at the turning point of his madness. They were carried out voluntarily, meditated upon, mastered, with an inflexible firmness of intention, neither to transport the Greek text into German, nor to lead the German language back to Greek sources, but to unify the two powers, the one representing the vicissitudes of the West, the other those of the East, in the simplicity of a total and pure language. The result is almost terrible. It sounds like he has discovered between the two languages such a deep accord, such a fundamental harmony, that it substitutes itself for meaning, or that it has succeeded in making of the hiatus that opens between them the origin of a new meaning.<sup>14</sup>

Curiously, Benjamin uses the same word, 'prototype' (*das Urbild*), to characterize Hölderlin's translations that he uses to characterize the interlinear translation of Scripture: 'they are to even the most perfect renderings of their texts as a prototype is to a model.' Given these two very different 'prototypes' of translation, one wonders how the 'model' should be conceived; or indeed, if the very notion of a model is not here precluded or mystified. These two different 'prototypes,' moreover, are related: it is only the 'truth' of Scripture – Scripture as 'pure language' – that can provide a stop (*ein Halten*) to the loss of meaning in the Hölderlin translations, where, as Benjamin puts it, 'meaning collapses from abyss to abyss, until it threatens to lose itself in the bottomless depths of language.' Since this halt can only be rendered through the textual doubling of the interlinear, does the absence of Holy Writ mean that all translation necessarily amounts to a doubling of a doubling, to an endless transfer or repetition of difference as a kind of primal rift in language? This is the question Benjamin's essay both raises and refuses to pose, and no 'model' of translation is set forth.

Although Benjamin forcefully rejects any notion of translation as the copy or reproduction of a Platonic essence, his use of the model-copy relationship (or that of the prototype to model) remains ambiguous and untheorized, perhaps because of a profound reluctance to undermine

altogether the theological resonances already noted. In order to theorize more fully this nascent anti-Platonic perspective, I propose that we consider translation as a simulacrum, not in the Platonic sense of a bad copy or image, however, but in the sense following the 'overturning of Platonism' elaborated by Gilles Deleuze.<sup>15</sup> Deleuze shows that Plato establishes the model-copy distinction only in order to found and justify another opposition, the one between copies and simulacra, or 'good' images and 'bad.' The 'good image' internalizes the relations and proportions of the Idea of a thing, and thus may be said to 'resemble' it. The 'bad image' or simulacrum, on the other hand, contains a disparity or difference, although it can and usually does provide an effect of resemblance. Plato, however, privileges self-identity, similitude, and the order of the same in an absolute sense. That is, the resemblance of the copy to the model presumes and is guaranteed by the ontological priority of the self-identical Idea, which necessitates that difference can only appear in a negative and secondary light, in the shadows of disparity and discrepancy, so to speak. Moreover, in the Platonic conception of reproduction or image-making (*eidolon*), the original remains unaffected; for Plato's archetypal model, then, repetition doesn't change a thing.

Against this model of Platonic repetition of the same, Deleuze opposes a Nietzschean concept of repetition that valorizes difference:

Let us consider two formulations: 'only that which resembles itself differs,' and 'only differences resemble one another.' It is a question of two readings of the world insofar as the one urges us to think of difference starting from a pre-established similitude or identity, whereas the other invites us on the contrary to think of similitude and even identity as the product of a fundamental disparity. The first defines exactly the world of copies or of representations; it establishes the world as icon. The second, against the first, defines the world of simulacra. It establishes the world itself as phantasm.<sup>16</sup>

Now if we consider the simulacrum for itself, rather than in the light of the Platonic valorization of self-identity and sameness, we are led to a different perception of the model-copy relationship: the Platonic oppositions between Idea and image, original and copy, model and simulacrum lose their foundation, and become ungrounded. In fact, as Deleuze shows, it is the desire to efface the 'difference' internalized in the simulacrum that leads Plato in *The Sophist* to have the simulacra tracked down and suppressed, and the self-identical Idea or true model elevated as the origin. In other words, what makes the 'good images' true to the model or the original is the simultaneous effacement of difference and a kind of belated act of induction whereby the 'model' is produced as an after-effect, and then hypostatized as the origin.

In Deleuze's reversal of Platonism, therefore, the simulacrum can no longer be regarded as a 'bad' or degraded image, since the model or 'original' that founds this distinction is no longer distinct from the copy or imitation; instead, within the simulacrum, at least two divergent series are interiorized, with neither being assignable as the original or the copy. These series never converge, but resonate through the agency of what Deleuze calls a 'dark precursor,' a force that moves through them without ever allowing any re-centering or re-alignment that would imply an essence. Thus, if the copy or 'good image' is centered on the model, and the model on the Idea (through Plato's theory of participation), then the simulacrum de-centers the series, causing divergences that lead to chaos. Or rather, as Deleuze prefers to call it, to a 'chaosmos' of free and de-centered differences, the product of ceaseless de-centerings and displacements.

It is in this sense that we should consider Hölderlin's translations as 'simulacra': rather than faithfully reproducing the essential meanings of Sophocles' plays, they forge a new language in which ancient Greek and modern German are present as two diverging but resonant series of words. In a reversal of the relationship between 'original' and 'imitation,' the translations propose themselves as the 'origin' of a new set of meanings sometimes indistinguishable from a-signifying verbal intensities, a reversal that converts parts of Sophocles' plays into precursors of Hölderlin's own dark poetry.

In order to pursue this view of translation, let us turn to a more contemporary example of 'translation as simulacrum': Louis Wolfson's *Le Schizo et les langues*.<sup>17</sup> Published in Paris in 1970, the book is a memoir written in French by an American schizophrenic born in New York in 1931. Wolfson's problem is that he cannot bear to hear or speak his mother tongue, which is English, and so devises an ingenious method for translating the sounds of English into similar sounds in various foreign languages, in some cases into foreign-language cognates, in such a way that the meaning of the original is nevertheless still conveyed. For example, when his mother shouts at him, 'Don't trip over the wire,' he instantaneously translates this in his head into: '*Tu'icht tréb über èth hé Zwirn.*' Thus, 'Don't' becomes the German '*Tu'icht*,' 'trip' becomes the first four letters of the French '*trébucher*,' 'over' becomes the German '*über*,' 'the' becomes the Hebrew '*èth hé*,' and 'wire' becomes the German '*Zwirn*.' To avoid hearing English – he lives with his mother and stepfather in a Manhattan apartment – Wolfson employs other methods as well: he wears ear plugs, listens to foreign-language broadcasts on his portable radio, grinds his teeth, and mutters foreign phrases he has memorized.

But these are all stopgap measures, providing only partial relief. What Wolfson needs, requiring efforts that he painstakingly records, is a

repertoire of such compound foreign expressions that will provide him with a total and instantaneous translation of English into other sounds. To do this he works out several general strategies. First of all, he plunges into the study of foreign languages, notably French, German, Russian, and Hebrew, paying particularly close attention to general phonetic rules such as consonant shifts and metastheses that will aid him in this transformation. The main problem, he observes, resides in the consonants, which provide the 'bone structure' of the word, whereas the vowels form almost undifferentiated 'plastic masses.' These consonants often get on his nerves, he says; they bounce around and echo in his head like sounds in an empty shell, or like the static in a radio reception caused by a storm. Nevertheless, he becomes quite adept at this special kind of linguistic transformation, as we see in his detailed descriptions of the problems certain words pose. In the example above, Wolfson finds the German *Zwirn* still too close to 'wire,' which he pronounces '*vir*,' so he reverses the consonants to obtain '*riv*,' replaces the vowel *i* with an *o*, yielding '*rov*,' which is close enough to *provoloka* – the Russian word for 'wire.' But let us take a more extended example, the verb 'believe' for instance: the prefix *be-* is easy, and passes directly into German; '*lieve*' is difficult, however, not only because of consonants *l* and *v*, but because the syllable is homonymic with the word 'leave' which has two different meanings ('to depart' and 'authorization'); therefore, to convert 'leave' into the French *laisser* or German *lassen* is not satisfactory, nor even into the German *verlassen*, since the English *v* remains as a labiodental fricative. Another way offers itself: since one rule of transformation dictates that *g* precede an *l*, as in *luck-glück*, or *like-gleich*, 'believe' can become *beglauben* with a second transformation of the *v* into *b*; this allows us, or Wolfson rather, to return to 'leave' by translating it *verlaub* (authorization). But a linguistic gap still remains between the two senses of 'leave,' a gap that is only imperfectly filled through the introduction of a new English word 'let' and the German *lassen*.

Such torturous renderings will give some idea of how Wolfson works. In his account, we are treated to similar but mostly longer descriptions of his translations of 'where,' 'vegetable shortening' – the consonants of the latter word pushing Wolfson to a grotesque twisting of Hebrew, German and Russian words – 'lady' from the song 'Good Night, Ladies' and many others. But no matter how ingenious his efforts, there is always a gap. In this last example, the transformation of 'lady' into the German *Leute* or the Russian *loudi*, meaning 'people,' conserves only one of the word's semantic components; moreover, the feminine gender designation is lost. Sometimes Wolfson will merely associate words by means of the most pronounced consonants or letters, often in the case of signs. Thus, encountering the word 'tired,' he immediately thinks the French words *faTigué*, *exTénué*, *couRbaTure*, *RenDu* and the German *maTT*,

*kapuTT*, *eRschöpfT* or *ERMüdeT*. Once he converts the English word 'early' to the fake German word *urlich*.

These labors, Wolfson states – he always refers to himself in the third person, as 'the schizophrenic student of languages,' 'the mentally ill student,' or 'the demented student of idioms' – always bring a measure of relief: 'If the schizophrenic did not experience joy as a result of his finds [*ses trouvailles*] that day, foreign words to annihilate yet another word of his mother tongue (for perhaps, in fact, he was incapable of this sentiment), certainly he felt much less miserable than usual, at least for awhile.' But while a full discussion of Wolfson's pathological obsessions lies outside the scope of this essay, it can already be seen that his efforts as a translator amount to something like a grotesque parody of Benjamin's theory. For in Wolfson's attempt to break down, destroy, and then reconstitute English in the sounds of another language – not a real language but a simulated language, a simulacrum of a language – he acts out a perverse inversion of Benjamin's theory. Which is to say that in Wolfson's sickness or 'maladie mentale,' English exists in something like a state comparable to Benjamin's 'pure language,' but its purity here is a wounding purity, since its words enter him directly and penetrate his being. We see this immediacy of the nominative function in action when Wolfson's mother aggressively names foodstuffs in order to attack or punish him, since for him the names immediately become the things (the 'mode of intention' of English no longer mediates a world outside). Hence Wolfson's need for translation, for a mediation that will provide passage out of and away from the wounding power of names. Yet in his effort to get out of English and to construct his Babel-like simulacrum of a language, Wolfson lives the very difference towards which Benjamin directs our attention. This difference is not lived in relation to a disincarnate fullness or utopia of meaning, however, but in relation to the body as the site where meaning becomes affect.

In a prefatory essay to Wolfson's book, Deleuze analyzes this 'pathology' in the psychoanalytic logic of the partial object: the phonemes of English that rattle in Wolfson's head and penetrate his body, the morsels of food that he avoids assiduously and then devours deliriously, suffering pangs of guilt in the aftermath, the parts of his mother's body – most notably the glass eye she takes out at night – are all part-objects, forming multiplicities within multiplicities, calling out for yet always frustrating any totalization. Wolfson's effort to construct a 'continuous idiom' out of all non-English words thus reveals his need for a total object or full body, where parts are not at one and the same time excessively present and obtrusively lacking. We see this in his every obsession, whether it be to plug up all his body orifices, watch workmen repair crevices in a wall, or refuse to leave the New York Public Library at 42nd Street until all the doors are closed. But Deleuze also shows that Wolfson's cure lies not in



his becoming conscious of the meaning of his psychosis, since it doesn't concern anything that could be designated or signified by words. Rather, his whole obsession (including his pathological eating habits) passes through language, and so it is in translation that both sickness and cure are played out.<sup>18</sup>

Wolfson himself states that every general linguistics is motivated by the desire to murder the mother tongue: it is, he says, 'perhaps a vague desire, if not unconscious and repressed, not to have to experience the natural language as an entity like others experience it, but on the contrary to be able to experience it differently, like something in excess [*de plus*], exotic, like a mixture, a pot pourri of diverse idioms.' For Wolfson, then, difference is maintained in and through translation, even becomes its *raison d'être*, yet the entire enterprise is the very inverse – let us say the de-sublimation – of Benjamin's 'task of the translator.'

The example of Wolfson, like that of Hölderlin, dramatically underscores the lack within the simulacrum – within translations which we can regard as such – of the kind of internal restraints which would operate normatively, as in the Platonic or 'reproductive' models. But then how can translation when viewed or understood as a simulacrum possibly be measured in practical terms? Does this not amount to an 'anything goes' attitude, to a *ne plus ultra* of creative freedom, since it even does away with Benjamin's only 'control factor,' the 'pure language' of absolute meaning? If the foundational and evaluative criteria derived from fidelity and correspondence to the original can no longer be admitted, how can the value of any translation be judged? What is called for is a pragmatic or materialist version of Benjamin's notion, but one that doesn't simply collapse or lead back into a positivist definition of language. By way of conclusion, I would like to sketch very quickly one possible framework that remains conceptually commensurate with the theory of translation as simulacrum, but which also acknowledges the historical and institutional constraints that of necessity will always be present.

In his book *L'Aliénation linguistique*, Henri Gobard explores the problem of teaching English in the context of the French educational system.<sup>19</sup> The question raised at the outset is, what English is being taught, and what English is being learned? What language, in short, does the word 'English' refer to in this context? Certainly not to what is spoken by a tobacco shop owner in Cornwall, or a Toyota salesman in Des Moines. And furthermore: how is the incentive to learn English, as well as the 'invading' language itself, being imposed in more subtle and diffuse ways than through the obvious economic and financial circuits? To answer these and related questions, Gobard proposes what he calls a 'tetraglossic' model based on different language functions: first is the 'vernacular,' the mother tongue or native language, spoken simultaneously in geographically restricted areas (a village, a small community,

or region); second is the urban or national 'vehicular' language, the language of society, commerce and bureaucracy, the primary purpose of which is communication, as opposed to the 'vernacular,' the language of community in the literal sense, involving not the exchange of information but the presenting of forms of recognition; third is the 'referential' language, the language of culture and tradition that assures the continuity of values through systematic reference to enshrined works of the past; and fourth, finally, is the 'mythic' language, which functions as a kind of ultimate recourse, a verbal magic whose 'incomprehensibility' is experienced as irrefutable proof of its sacred character (the word 'amen,' for example, or the Latin used in the Catholic Church). The scheme is also intended to be applied to a whole linguistic environment as it changes over time: thus, in the European Middle Ages, there were various vernaculars, but Latin was the vehicular language, Greek the referential, and Hebrew the mythic language. Later, in the eighteenth century, French became the primary vehicular language, whereas today it is obviously English.

In his study of Kafka, co-authored with Félix Guattari, Deleuze takes up and modifies Gobard's scheme by understanding each language function in relation to particular social and political *agencements* or 'assemblages.'<sup>20</sup> Deleuze sees the mother or territorial tongue as deterritorialized (or decoded) by the vehicular language, which creates 'information' fluxes and flows through a process of abstraction and decontextualization. This movement is then countered at the level of the referential and mythic languages, which bring about a re-territorialization (or recoding) through the (re)imposition of cultural and religious (or spiritual) values and meanings. This double process is not only simultaneous, but occurs at every level of communication: thus articulated speech itself is first of all a deterritorialized sound that is reterritorialized in meaning. Deleuze and Guattari see in Kafka, a German-speaking Jew living in Prague, a writer whose manner of writing and choice of subject-matter provide a striking example of this entire process. The Czech-influenced German of Prague is an impoverished language, already deterritorialized, but Kafka's way of writing constitutes a refusal of the various reterritorializations that his contemporaries in the same milieu will opt for, whether it be the hypercultural use of High German, the symbolic and mythical use of Hebrew, or of the popular, orally inflected Yiddish. Instead, Kafka pushes further along the lines of deterritorialization, toward an 'a-signifying intensive use of language,' a new dryness and sobriety that will 'carry the tongue away into the desert,' as Deleuze and Guattari state, beyond any point where culture or myth can effect a recoding or recuperation.

It should now be evident that translation also enacts a deterritorialization, but one that is always followed by a reterritorialization as well. Both

occur as normal, regulated processes within the literary and publishing institutions, which at once instigate and insure that both processes take place. Yet, as we have seen, there are extreme instances where translation enacts an 'absolute' deterritorialization, where some sort of limit is reached. This is clearly the case in the example of Hölderlin, where instead of being reterritorialized by means of the referential and mythic values of Sophocles' Greek, Hölderlin's German is completely deterritorialized, and meaning dissolves in the production of pure, vocalic intensities. Wolfson's mad linguistic tinkering provides another example of deterritorialized translation, but there we have seen how his undertaking can also, at least in part, be reterritorialized through psychoanalysis.

Hölderlin's translations, Wolfson's *Le Schizo et les langues* - these verbal simulacra, admittedly, are atypical instances. Nevertheless, can we not say that finally every translation is a simulacrum, if we understand this word in two different senses, and according to what the translation may be said to accomplish? A translation aiming at fidelity and accuracy, one that renders the original 'faithfully' into a second language, but in so doing only reconstitutes this target language in its vehicular aspect, reterritorializing the changes that occur in the process through reference to the already written, to previously established cultural codings, is a simulacrum, but in the negative or Platonic sense: it is merely a bad copy, and the target language remains the same. On the other hand, those translations that accomplish something different by maintaining the originary difference in and through translation, that deterritorialize the target language in such a way that it can't be recoded and recuperated by appeal to established cultural and spiritual meanings, that thereby manifest something new in the language, are also simulacra, diverging from the original but also resonant with it, bringing to fulfillment or pushing along further what the original carried only as a precursor. In these terms, translation could be said to effectuate a 'becoming of language' as important as - because ultimately inextricable from - the becoming of literature itself.

## NOTES

- 1 See Paul de Man, 'Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator,"' in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); and *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), which includes Derrida's essay, 'Des tours de Babel.'
- 2 All quotations cited here are from the English version in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969). The German text, which I also cite, may be found in Walter Benjamin, *Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972), vol. iv, no. 1.
- 3 In *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy: A New Theory of Words* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), Andrew Benjamin argues that the

traditional or conventional view of translation is governed by an unquestioning and philosophically problematic 'prioritizing' of literal over figural meaning. This important contribution to translation theory, which only became available after my present essay had been written, also contains a chapter devoted to Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator,' where it is argued that Walter Benjamin's conception of translation 'takes place beyond, and is to that extent therefore not advanced in terms of, the distinction between the literal and the figural' (p. 86).

- 4 Benjamin writes: 'In "Brot" und "pain" ist das Gemeinte zwar dasselbe, die Art, es zu meinen, dagegen nicht. In der Art des Meinens nämlich liegt es, dass beide Worte dem Deutschen und Franzosen je etwas Verschiedenes bedeuten, dass sie für beide nicht vertauschbar sind, ja sich letzten Endes auszuschließen streben; am Gemeinten aber, dass sie, absolut genommen, das Selbe und Identische bedeuten' (p. 14).
- 5 In German: 'So weit ist sie entfernt, von zwei erstorbenen Sprachen die taube Gleichung zu sein, dass gerade unter allen Formen ihr als Eigenstes es zufällt, auf jene Nachreife des fremden Wortes, auf die Wehen des Eigenen zu merken' (p. 13). De Man points out that *Wehen* means any kind of suffering, not necessarily 'birth pangs,' as Zohn translates it, and that to translate *Nachreife* as 'maturing process' is to miss not only the melancholy, late summer associations of the word but also its associations with the word *überleben*, which Benjamin frequently uses to refer to the artwork's 'afterlife.'
- 6 Hugh Kenner, 'Introduction,' *Ezra Pound: Translations* (New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 9.
- 7 For further discussion, see Joseph Riddel, 'The Anomalies of Literary (Post)Modernism,' *Arizona Quarterly*, 44: 3 (1988): 109–14. Riddel's account of Pound's practice, specifically Pound's tendency to establish the 'constitutive equivocality' of the *el* phoneme, which then generates or inseminates his own 'translated' text (*Elpenor, Helen, Eleanor, Sordello, El Sid, T. S. Eliot, Elohim, Elysian field*, and so on), is fully compatible, even illustrative of, the Deleuzian view of translation proposed below.
- 8 Alexander Gerschenkron, 'A Magnificent Monument?,' *Modern Philology*, 63 (1966): 340.
- 9 See Vladimir Nabokov, 'Foreword,' *Eugene Onegin* (New York: Pantheon, 1964), vol. 1.
- 10 George Steiner, *After Babel* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 73–109.
- 11 In his chapter on Benjamin in *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy*, Andrew Benjamin discusses this messianic theme in relation to Gershom Scholem's work on Jewish mysticism and the Kabbalah (to which, as a friend, Benjamin had access), particularly in relation to the Kabbalistic doctrine of the *tikkun* ('the re-establishment of the harmony of the world') developed by Isaac ben Solomon Luria. The key point is that the Lurianic reinterpretation of the myth of creation does not posit a Babelian view of an initial or paradisaal language. When applied to Benjamin, this would suggest that the 'pure language' should not be understood in relation to the shattering of a formerly paradisaal language that now only exists as 'the broken parts of the vessel,' but rather, through the *tikkun*, as the utopian or futural possibility of a language of harmony, of 'agreement and variance.' The problem here is that, as Derrida emphasizes in his essay, 'Des tours de Babel,' Benjamin's entire theory of language assumes the 'Babelian event.' Andrew Benjamin encounters similar difficulties when he tries to argue that Benjamin's theory contains a 'radical

break . . . with a Platonic conception and hence the history of mimesis' (p. 92), despite Benjamin's own claim (in 'On the Mimetic Faculty') that 'language may be seen as the highest level of mimetic behavior.' As Andrew Benjamin admits in his conclusion to the chapter (p. 102), he is reading Benjamin 'against the grain' in order to 'redeem him for a philosophical future.' Derrida, in my judgment, is much more sensitive to the limits of Benjamin's formulations.

- 12 Maurice Blanchot, 'Traduire,' in *L'Amitié* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 71; my translation.
- 13 De Man's argument is that this originary strangeness is not so much passed on as signified, allegorically as it were (although here de Man does not use the term), by translation. Thus, translation explicitly turns the symbol into the symbolized, points up the disjunctions between grammar and meaning, trope and argument, *Wort* and *Satz*; in a word, the translation 'de-originate' and de-canonizes the original by undermining its status as a self-identical artifact.
- 14 Blanchot, 'Traduire,' p. 73.
- 15 See Gilles Deleuze, 'Platon et le simulacre,' in *Logique du sens* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1969), pp. 292-307, and *Différence et répétition* (Paris: PUF, 1968), *passim*.
- 16 Deleuze, 'Platon et le simulacre,' p. 302; my translation.
- 17 Louis Wolfson, *Le Schizo et les langues*, Preface by Gilles Deleuze (Paris: Gallimard, 1970).
- 18 In his Preface to Wolfson's *Le Schizo et les langues*, Deleuze states that 'psychosis and its language are inseparable from "linguistic procedure," from a linguistic procedure. It is the problem of the procedure that, in psychosis, has replaced the problem of signification and of repression' (p. 23). In turn, Michel Foucault, in his Preface to Jean Pierre Brisset's *La Logique grammair*e (Paris: Tchou, 1970), suggests that Deleuze's assumption can help us understand how the peculiar 'linguistic procedures' in the writings of Raymond Roussel, Wolfson and Brisset function in relation to designation, signification and translation respectively. Brisset is especially notable here because of his attempt to (re)create an ur-language, in this case French, in a state of primitive multiplicity that is untranslatable into an abstract or universalist grammar. Like Wolfson, his translation practice performs an inversion of Benjamin's theory. For further discussion, see my essay 'Dis-course as Event: Foucault, Writing, and Literature,' *MLN*, 105 (1990): 800-18.
- 19 Henri Gobard, *L'Aliénation linguistique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1976).
- 20 See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), especially chap. 3.

# GENDER AND THE METAPHORICS OF TRANSLATION

*Lori Chamberlain*

In a letter to the nineteenth-century violinist Joseph Joachim, Clara Schumann declares, 'Bin ich auch nicht producierend, so doch reproducierend' (Even if I am not a creative artist, still I am recreating).<sup>1</sup> While she played an enormously important role reproducing her husband's works, both in concert and later in preparing editions of his work, she was also a composer in her own right; yet until recently, historians have focused on only one composer in this family. Indeed, as feminist scholarship has amply demonstrated, conventional representations of women – whether artistic, social, economic, or political – have been guided by a cultural ambivalence about the possibility of a woman artist and about the status of woman's 'work.' In the case of Clara Schumann, it is ironic that one of the reasons she could not be a more productive composer is that she was kept busy with the eight children she and Robert Schumann produced together.

From our vantage point, we recognize claims that 'there are no great women artists' as expressions of a gender-based paradigm concerning the disposition of power in the family and the state. As feminist research from a variety of disciplines has shown, the opposition between productive and reproductive work organizes the way a culture values work: this paradigm depicts originality or creativity in terms of paternity and authority, relegating the figure of the female to a variety of secondary roles. I am interested in this opposition specifically as it is used to mark the distinction between writing and translating – marking, that is, the one to be original and 'masculine,' the other to be derivative and 'feminine.' The distinction is only superficially a problem of aesthetics, for there are important consequences in the areas of publishing, royalties, curriculum, and academic tenure. What I propose here is to examine what is at stake for gender in the *representation* of translation: the struggle for authority and the politics of originality informing this struggle.

'At best an echo,'<sup>2</sup> translation has been figured literally and metaphorically in secondary terms. Just as Clara Schumann's performance of a

musical composition is seen as qualitatively different from the original act of composing that piece, so the act of translating is viewed as something qualitatively different from the original act of writing. Indeed, under current American copyright law, both translations and musical performances are treated under the same rubric of 'derivative works.'<sup>3</sup> The cultural elaboration of this view suggests that in the original abides what is natural, truthful, and lawful, in the copy, what is artificial, false, and treasonous. Translations can be, for example, echoes (in musical terms), copies or portraits (in painterly terms), or borrowed or ill-fitting clothing (in sartorial terms).

The sexualization of translation appears perhaps most familiarly in the tag *les belles infidèles* – like women, the adage goes, translations should be either beautiful or faithful. The tag is made possible both by the rhyme in French and by the fact that the word *traduction* is a feminine one, thus making *les beaux infidèles* impossible. This tag owes its longevity – it was coined in the seventeenth century<sup>4</sup> – to more than phonetic similarity: what gives it the appearance of truth is that it has captured a cultural complicity between the issues of fidelity in translation and in marriage. For *les belles infidèles*, fidelity is defined by an implicit contract between translation (as woman) and original (as husband, father, or author). However, the infamous 'double standard' operates here as it might have in traditional marriages: the 'unfaithful' wife/translation is publicly tried for crimes the husband/original is by law incapable of committing. This contract, in short, makes it impossible for the original to be guilty of infidelity. Such an attitude betrays real anxiety about the problem of paternity and translation; it mimics the patrilineal kinship system where paternity – not maternity – legitimizes an offspring.

It is the struggle for the right of paternity, regulating the fidelity of translation, which we see articulated by the earl of Roscommon in his seventeenth-century treatise on translation. In order to guarantee the originality of the translator's work, surely necessary in a paternity case, the translator must usurp the author's role. Roscommon begins benignly enough, advising the translator to 'Chuse an author as you chuse a friend,' but this intimacy serves a potentially subversive purpose:

United by this Sympathetick Bond,  
 You grow Familiar, Intimate, and Fond;  
 Your thoughts, your Words, your Stiles, your Souls agree,  
 No longer his Interpreter, but He.<sup>5</sup>

It is an almost silent deposition: through familiarity (friendship), the translator becomes, as it were, part of the family and finally the father himself; whatever struggle there might be between author and translator is veiled by the language of friendship. While the translator is figured as a

male, the text itself is figured as a female whose chastity must be protected:

With how much ease is a young Muse Betray'd  
 How nice the Reputation of the Maid!  
 Your early, kind, paternal care appears,  
 By chaste Instruction of her Tender Years.  
 The first Impression in her Infant Breast  
 Will be the deepest and should be the best.  
 Let no Austerity breed servile Fear  
 No wanton Sound offend her Virgin Ear.<sup>6</sup>

As the translator becomes the author, he incurs certain paternal duties in relation to the text, to protect and instruct – or perhaps structure – it. The language used echoes the language of conduct books and reflects attitudes about the proper differences in educating males and females; 'chaste Instruction' is proper for the female, whose virginity is an essential prerequisite to marriage. The text, that blank page bearing the author's imprint ('The first Impression . . . Will be the deepest'), is impossibly twice virgin – once for the original author, and again for the translator who has taken his place. It is this 'chastity' which resolves – or represses – the struggle for paternity.<sup>7</sup>

The gendering of translation by this language of paternalism is made more explicit in the eighteenth-century treatise on translation by Thomas Francklin:

Unless an author like a mistress warms,  
 How shall we hide his faults or taste his charms,  
 How all his modest latent beauties find,  
 How trace each lovelier feature of the mind,  
 Soften each blemish, and each grace improve,  
 And treat him with the dignity of Love?<sup>8</sup>

Like the earl of Roscommon, Francklin represents the translator as a male who usurps the role of the author, a usurpation which takes place at the level of grammatical gender and is resolved through a sex change. The translator is figured as a male seducer; the author, conflated with the conventionally 'feminine' features of his text, is then the 'mistress,' and the masculine pronoun is forced to refer to the feminine attributes of the text ('his modest latent beauties'). In confusing the gender of the author with the ascribed gender of the text, Francklin 'translates' the creative role of the author into the passive role of the text, rendering the author relatively powerless in relation to the translator. The author-text, now a mistress, is flattered and seduced by the translator's attentions, becoming a willing collaborator in the project to make herself beautiful – and, no doubt, unfaithful.



This *belle infidèle*, whose blemishes have been softened and whose beauties have therefore been improved, is depicted both as mistress and as a portrait model. In using the popular painting analogy, Francklin also reveals the gender coding of that mimetic convention: the translator/painter must seduce the text in order to 'trace' (translate) the features of his subject. We see a more elaborate version of this convention, though one arguing a different position on the subject of improvement through translation, in William Cowper's 'Preface' to Homer's *Iliad*: 'Should a painter, professing to draw the likeness of a beautiful woman, give her more or fewer features than belong to her, and a general cast of countenance of his own invention, he might be said to have produced a *jeu d'esprit*, a curiosity perhaps in its way, but by no means the lady in question.'<sup>9</sup> Cowper argues for fidelity to the beautiful model, lest the translation demean her, reducing her to a mere '*jeu d'esprit*,' or, to follow the text yet further, make her monstrous ('give her more or fewer features'). Yet lurking behind the phrase 'the lady in question' is the suggestion that she is the *other* woman – the beautiful, and potentially unfaithful, mistress. In any case, like the earl of Roscommon and Francklin, Cowper feminizes the text and makes her reputation – that is, her fidelity – the responsibility of the male translator/author.

Just as texts are conventionally figured in feminine terms, so too is language: our 'mother tongue.' And when aesthetic debates shifted the focus in the late eighteenth century from problems of mimesis to those of expression – in M.H. Abrams' famous terms, from the mirror to the lamp – discussions of translation followed suit. The translator's relationship to this mother figure is outlined in some of the same terms that we have already seen – fidelity and chastity – and the fundamental problem remains the same: how to regulate legitimate sexual (authorial) relationships and their progeny.

A representative example depicting translation as a problem of fidelity to the 'mother tongue' occurs in the work of Schleiermacher, whose twin interests in translation and hermeneutics have been influential in shaping translation theory in this century. In discussing the issue of maintaining the essential foreignness of a text in translation, Schleiermacher outlines what is at stake as follows:

Who would not like to permit his mother tongue to stand forth everywhere in the most universally appealing beauty each genre is capable of? Who would not rather sire children who are their parents' pure effigy, and not bastards? . . . Who would suffer being accused, like those parents who abandon their children to acrobats, of bending his mother tongue to foreign and unnatural dislocations instead of skillfully exercising it in its own natural gymnastics?<sup>10</sup>

The translator, as father, must be true to the mother/language in order to

produce legitimate offspring; if he attempts to sire children otherwise, he will produce bastards fit only for the circus. Because the mother tongue is conceived of as natural, any tampering with it – any infidelity – is seen as unnatural, impure, monstrous, and immoral. Thus, it is ‘natural’ law which requires monogamous relations in order to maintain the ‘beauty’ of the language and in order to insure that the works be genuine or original. Though his reference to bastard children makes clear that he is concerned over the purity of the mother tongue, he is also concerned with the paternity of the text. ‘Legitimacy’ has little to do with motherhood and more to do with the institutional acknowledgment of fatherhood. The question, ‘Who is the real father of the text?’ seems to motivate these concerns about both the fidelity of the translation and the purity of the language.

In the metaphors of translation, the struggle for authorial rights takes place both in the realm of the family, as we have seen, and in the state, for translation has also been figured as the literary equivalent of colonization, a means of enriching both the language and the literature appropriate to the political needs of expanding nations. A typical translator’s preface from the English eighteenth century makes this explicit:

You, my Lord, know how the works of genius lift up the head of a nation above her neighbors, and give as much honor as success in arms; among these we must reckon our translations of the classics; by which when we have naturalized all Greece and Rome, we shall be so much richer than they by so many original productions as we have of our own.<sup>11</sup>

Because literary success is equated with military success, translation can expand both literary and political borders. A similar attitude toward the enterprise of translation may be found in the German Romantics, who used *übersetzen* (to translate) and *verdeutschen* (to Germanize) interchangeably: translation was literally a strategy of linguistic incorporation. The great model for this use of translation is, of course, the Roman Empire, which so dramatically incorporated Greek culture into its own. For the Romans, Nietzsche asserts, ‘translation was a form of conquest.’<sup>12</sup>

Then, too, the politics of colonialism overlap significantly with the politics of gender we have seen so far. Flora Amos shows, for example, that during the sixteenth century in England, translation is seen as ‘public duty.’ The most stunning example of what is construed as ‘public duty’ is articulated by a sixteenth-century English translator of Horace named Thomas Drant, who, in the preface to his translation of the Roman author, boldly announces,

First I have now done as the people of God were commanded to do

with their captive women that were handsome and beautiful: I have shaved off his hair and pared off his nails, that is, I have wiped away all his vanity and superfluity of matter. . . . I have Englished things not according to the vein of the Latin propriety, but of his own vulgar tongue. . . . I have pieced his reason, eked and mended his similitudes, mollified his hardness, prolonged his cortall kind of speeches, changed and much altered his words, but not his sentence, or at least (I dare say) not his purpose.<sup>13</sup>

Drant is free to take the liberties he here describes, for, as a clergyman translating a secular author, he must make Horace morally suitable: he must transform him from the foreign or alien into, significantly, a member of the family. For the passage from the Bible to which Drant alludes (Deut. 21: 12-14) concerns the proper way to make a captive woman a wife: 'Then you shall bring her home to your house; and she shall shave her head and pare her nails' (Deut. 21:12, Revised Standard Version). After giving her a month in which to mourn, the captor can then take her as a wife; but if he finds in her no 'delight,' the passage forbids him subsequently to sell her because he has already humiliated her. In making Horace suitable to become a wife, Drant must transform him into a woman, the uneasy effects of which remain in the tension of pronominal reference, where 'his' seems to refer to 'women.' In addition, Drant's paraphrase makes it the husband-translator's duty to shave and pare rather than the duty of the captive Horace. Unfortunately, captors often did much more than shave the heads of captive women (see Num. 31: 17-18); the sexual violence alluded to in this description of translation provides an analogue to the political and economic rapes implicit in a colonializing metaphor.

Clearly, the meaning of the word 'fidelity' in the context of translation changes according to the purpose translation is seen to serve in a larger aesthetic or cultural context. In its gendered version, fidelity sometimes defines the (female) translation's relation to the original, particularly to the original's author (male), deposed and replaced by the author (male) of the translation. In this case, the text, if it is a good and beautiful one, must be regulated against its propensity for infidelity in order to authorize the originality of this *production*. Or, fidelity might also define a (male) author-translator's relation to his (female) mother-tongue, the language into which something is being translated. In this case, the (female) language must be protected against vilification. It is, paradoxically, this sort of fidelity that can justify the rape and pillage of another language and text, as we have seen in Drant. But again, this sort of fidelity is designed to enrich the 'host' language by certifying the originality of translation; the conquests, made captive, are incorporated into the 'works of genius' of a particular language.

It should by now be obvious that this metaphors of translation reveals both an anxiety about the myths of paternity (or authorship and authority) and a profound ambivalence about the role of maternity - ranging from the condemnation of *les belles infidèles* to the adulation accorded to the 'mother tongue.' In one of the few attempts to deal with both the practice and the metaphors of translation, Serge Gavronsky argues that the source of this anxiety and ambivalence lies in the oedipal structure which informs the translator's options. Gavronsky divides the world of translation metaphors into two camps. The first group he labels pietistic: metaphors based on the coincidence of courtly and Christian traditions, wherein the conventional knight pledges fidelity to the unravished lady, as the Christian to the Virgin. In this case, the translator (as knight or Christian) takes vows of humility, poverty - and chastity. In secular terms, this is called 'positional' translation, for it depends on a well-known hierarchization of the participants. The vertical relation (author/translator) has thus been overlaid with both metaphysical and ethical implications, and in this missionary position, submissiveness is next to godliness.

Gavronsky argues that the master/slave schema underlying this metaphoric model of translation is precisely the foundation of the oedipal triangle:

Here, in typically euphemistic terms, the slave is a willing one (a hyperbolic servant, a faithful): the translator considers himself as the child of the father-creator, his rival, while the text becomes the object of desire, that which has been completely defined by the paternal figure, the phallus-pen. Traditions (taboos) impose upon the translator a highly restricted ritual role. He is forced to curtail himself (strictly speaking) in order to respect the interdictions on incest. To tamper with the text would be tantamount to eliminating, in part or totally, the father-author(ity), the dominant present.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the 'paternal care' of which the earl of Roscommon speaks is one manifestation of this repressed incestuous relation with the text, a second being the concern for the purity of 'mother' (madonna) tongues.

The other side of the oedipal triangle may be seen in a desire to kill the symbolic father text/author. According to Gavronsky, the alternative to the pietistic translator is the cannibalistic, 'aggressive translator who seizes possession of the "original," who savors the text, that is, who truly feeds upon the words, who ingurgitates them, and who, thereafter, enunciates them in his own tongue, thereby having explicitly rid himself of the "original" creator.'<sup>15</sup> Whereas the 'pietistic' model represents translators as completely secondary to what is pure and original, the 'cannibalistic' model, Gavronsky claims, liberates translators from servility to 'cultural and ideological restrictions.' What Gavronsky desires

is to free the translator/translation from the signs of cultural secondariness, but his model is unfortunately inscribed within the same set of binary terms and either/or logic that we have seen in the metaphors of translation. Indeed, we can see the extent to which Gavronsky's metaphors are still inscribed within that ideology in the following description: 'The original has been captured, raped, and incest performed. Here, once again, the son is father of the man. The original is mutilated beyond recognition; the slave-master dialectic reversed.'<sup>16</sup> In repeating the sort of violence we have already seen so remarkably in Drant, Gavronsky betrays the dynamics of power in this 'paternal' system. Whether the translator quietly usurps the role of the author, the way the earl of Roscommon advocates, or takes authority through more violent means, power is still figured as a male privilege exercised in family and state political arenas. The translator, for Gavronsky, is a male who repeats on the sexual level the kinds of crimes any colonizing country commits on its colonies.

As Gavronsky himself acknowledges, the cannibalistic translator is based on the hermeneuticist model of George Steiner, the most prominent contemporary theorist of translation; Steiner's influential model illustrates the persistence of what I have called the politics of originality and its logic of violence in contemporary translation theory. In his *After Babel*, Steiner proposes a four-part process of translation. The first step, that of 'initiative trust,' describes the translator's willingness to take a gamble on the text, trusting that the text will yield something. As a second step, the translator takes an overtly aggressive step, 'penetrating' and 'capturing' the text (Steiner calls this 'appropriative penetration'), an act explicitly compared to erotic possession. During the third step, the imprisoned text must be 'naturalized,' must become part of the translator's language, literally incorporated or embodied. Finally, to compensate for this 'appropriative "rapture,"' the translator must restore the balance, attempt some act of reciprocity to make amends for the act of aggression. His model for this act of restitution is, he says, 'that of Lévi-Strauss's *Anthropologie structurale* which regards social structures as attempts at dynamic equilibrium achieved through an exchange of words, women, and material goods.' Steiner thereby makes the connection explicit between the exchange of women, for example, and the exchange of words in one language for words in another.<sup>17</sup>

Steiner makes the sexual politics of his argument quite clear in the opening chapter of his book, where he outlines the model for 'total reading.' Translation, as an act of interpretation, is a special case of communication, and communication is a sexual act: 'Eros and language mesh at every point. Intercourse and discourse, copula and copulation, are sub-classes of the dominant fact of communication. . . . Sex is a profoundly semantic act.'<sup>18</sup> Steiner makes note of a cultural tendency to see this act of communication from the male point of view and thus to

valorize the position of the father/author/original, but at the same time, he himself repeats this male focus in, for example, the following description of the relation between sexual intercourse and communication:

There is evidence that the sexual discharge in male onanism is greater than it is in intercourse. I suspect that the determining factor is articulateness, the ability to conceptualize with especial vividness. . . . Ejaculation is at once a physiological and a linguistic concept. Impotence and speech-blocks, premature emission and stuttering, involuntary ejaculation and the word-river of dreams are phenomena whose interrelations seem to lead back to the central knot of our humanity. Semen, excreta, and words are communicative products.<sup>19</sup>

The allusion here to Lévi-Strauss, echoed later in the book in the passage we have already noted ('an exchange of words, women, and material goods'), provides the narrative connecting discourse, intercourse, and translation, and it does so from the point of view of a male translator. Indeed, we note that when communication is at issue, that which can be exchanged is depicted at least partially in male terms ('semen, excreta, and words'), while when 'restitution' is at issue, that which can be exchanged is depicted in female terms.

Writing within the hierarchy of gender, Steiner seems to argue further that the paradigm is universal and that the male and female roles he describes are *essential* rather than *accidental*. On the other hand, he notes that the rules for discourse (and, presumably, for intercourse) are social, and he outlines some of the consequent differences between male and female language use:

At a rough guess, women's speech is richer than men's in those shadings of desire and futurity known in Greek and Sanskrit as optative; women seem to verbalize a wider range of qualified resolve and masked promise. . . . I do not say they lie about the obtuse, resistant fabric of the world: they multiply the facets of reality, they strengthen the adjective to allow it an alternative nominal status, in a way which men often find unnerving. There is a strain of ultimatum, a separatist stance, in the masculine intonation of the first-person pronoun; the 'I' of women intimates a more patient bearing, or did until Women's Liberation. The two language models follow on Robert Graves's dictum that men do but women are.<sup>20</sup>

But, while acknowledging the social and economic forces which prescribe differences, he wants to believe as well in a basic biological cause: 'Certain linguistic differences do point towards a physiological basis or, to be exact, towards the intermediary zone between the biological and the

social.<sup>21</sup> Steiner is careful not to insist on the biological premises, but there is in his own rhetoric a tendency to treat even the socialized differences between male and female language use as immutable. If the sexual basis of communication as the basis for translation is to be taken as a universal, then Steiner would seem to be arguing firmly in the tradition we have here been examining, one in which 'men do' but 'women are.' This tradition is not, of course, confined to the area of translation studies, and, given the influence of both Steiner and Lévi-Strauss, it is not surprising to see gender as the framing concept of communication in adjacent fields such as semiotics or literary criticism.<sup>22</sup>

The metaphors of translation, as the preceding discussion suggests, is a symptom of larger issues of western culture: of the power relations as they divide in terms of gender; of a persistent (though not always hegemonic) desire to equate language or language use with morality; of a quest for originality or unity, and a consequent intolerance of duplicity, of what cannot be decided. The fundamental question is, why have the two realms of translation and gender been metaphorically linked? What, in Eco's terms, is the metonymic code or narrative underlying these two realms?<sup>23</sup>

This survey of the metaphors of translation would suggest that the implied narrative concerns the relation between the value of production versus the value of reproduction. What proclaims itself to be an aesthetic problem is represented in terms of sex, family, and the state, and what is consistently at issue is power. We have already seen the way the concept of fidelity is used to regulate sex and/in the family, to guarantee that the child is the production of the father, reproduced by the mother. This regulation is a sign of the father's authority and power; it is a way of making visible the paternity of the child – otherwise a fiction of sorts – and thereby claiming the child as legitimate progeny. It is also, therefore, related to the owning and bequeathal of property. As in marriage, so in translation, there is a legal dimension to the concept of fidelity. It is not legal (shall I say, legitimate) to publish a translation of works not in the public domain, for example, without the author's (or appropriate proxy's) consent; one must, in short, enter the proper *contract* before announcing the birth of the translation, so that the parentage will be clear. The coding of production and reproduction marks the former as a more valuable activity by reference to the division of labor established for the marketplace, which privileges male activity and pays accordingly. The transformation of translation from a reproductive activity into a productive one, from a secondary work into an original work, indicates the coding of translation rights as property rights – signs of riches, signs of power.

I would further argue that the reason translation is so overcoded, so overregulated, is that it threatens to erase the difference between produc-

tion and reproduction which is essential to the establishment of power. Translations can, in short, masquerade as originals, thereby short-circuiting the system. That the *difference* is essential to maintain is argued in terms of life and death: 'Every saddened reader knows that what a poem is most in danger of losing in translation is its life.'<sup>24</sup> The danger posed by infidelity is here represented in terms of mortality; in a comment on the Loeb Library translations of the classics, Rolfe Humphries articulates the risk in more specific terms: 'They emasculate their originals.'<sup>25</sup> The sexual violence implicit in Drant's figuration of translation, then, can be seen as directed not simply against the female material of the text ('captive women') but against the sign of male authority as well; for, as we know from the story of Samson and Delilah, Drant's cutting of hair ('I have shaved off his hair and pared off his nails, that is, I have wiped away all his vanity and superfluity of matter') can signify loss of male power, a symbolic castration. This, then, is what one critic calls the *manque inévitable*: what the original risks losing, in short, is its phallus, the sign of paternity, authority, and originality.<sup>26</sup>

In the metaphoric system examined here, what the translator claims for 'himself' is precisely the right of paternity; he claims a phallus because this is the only way, in a patriarchal code, to claim legitimacy for the text. To claim that translating is like writing, then, is to make it a creative – rather than merely re-creative – activity. But the claims for originality and authority, made in reference to acts of artistic and biological creation, exist in sharp contrast to the place of translation in a literary or economic hierarchy. For, while writing and translating may share the same figures of gender division and power – a concern with the rights of authorship or authority – translating does not share the redemptive myths of nobility or triumph we associate with writing. Thus, despite metaphoric claims for equality with writers, translators are often reviled or ignored: it is not uncommon to find a review of a translation in a major periodical that fails to mention the translator or the process of translation. Translation projects in today's universities are generally considered only marginally appropriate as topics for doctoral dissertations or as support for tenure, unless the original author's stature is sufficient to authorize the project. While organizations such as PEN and ALTA (American Literary Translators Association) are working to improve the translator's economic status, organizing translators and advising them of their legal rights and responsibilities, even the best translators are still poorly paid. The academy's general scorn for translation contrasts sharply with its reliance on translation in the study of the 'classics' of world literature, of major philosophical and critical texts, and of previously unread masterpieces of the 'third' world. While the metaphors we have looked at attempted to cloak the secondary status of translation in the language of the phallus,



western culture enforces this secondariness with a vengeance, insisting on the feminized status of translation. Thus, though obviously both men and women engage in translation, the binary logic which encourages us to define nurses as female and doctors as male, teachers as female and professors as male, secretaries as female and corporate executives as male also defines translation as, in many ways, an archetypal feminine activity.

What is also interesting is that, even when the terms of comparison are reversed – when writing is said to be like translating – in order to stress the re-creative aspects of both activities, the gender bias does not disappear. For example, in a short essay by Terry Eagleton discussing the relation between translation and some strands of current critical theory, Eagleton argues as follows:

It may be, then, that translation from one language into another may lay bare for us something of the very productive mechanisms of textuality itself . . . The eccentric yet suggestive critical theories of Harold Bloom . . . contend that every poetic producer is locked in Oedipal rivalry with a 'strong' patriarchal precursor – that literary 'creation' . . . is in reality a matter of struggle, anxiety, aggression, envy and repression. The 'creator' cannot abolish the unwelcome fact that . . . his poem lurks in the shadows of a previous poem or poetic tradition, against the authority of which it must labour into its own 'autonomy.' On Bloom's reading, all poems are translations, or 'creative misreadings,' of others; and it is perhaps only the literal translator who knows most keenly the psychic cost and enthrallment which all writing involves.<sup>27</sup>

Eagleton's point, through Bloom, is that the productive or creative mechanism of writing is not *original*, that is, texts do not emerge *ex nihilo*; rather, both writing and translating depend on previous texts. Reversing the conventional hierarchy, he invokes the secondary status of translation as a model for writing. In equating translation and 'misreading,' however, Eagleton (through Bloom) finds their common denominator to be the struggle with a "strong" patriarchal precursor; the productive or creative mechanism is, again, entirely male. The attempt by either Eagleton or Bloom to replace the concept of originality with the concept of creative misreading or translation is a sleight of hand, a change in name only with respect to gender and the metaphors of translation, for the concept of translation has here been defined in the same patriarchal terms we have seen used to define originality and production.

At the same time, however, much of recent critical theory has called into question the myths of authority and originality which engender this privileging of writing over translating and make writing a male activity. Theories of intertextuality, for example, make it difficult to determine

the precise boundaries of a text and, as a consequence, disperse the notion of 'origins'; no longer simply the product of an autonomous (male?) individual, the text rather finds its *sources* in history, that is, within social and literary codes, as articulated by an author. Feminist scholarship has drawn attention to the considerable body of writing by women, writing previously marginalized or repressed in the academic canon; thus this scholarship brings to focus the conflict between theories of writing coded in male terms and the reality of the female writer. Such scholarship, in articulating the role gender has played in our concepts of writing and production, forces us to reexamine the hierarchies that have subordinated translation to a concept of originality. The resultant revisioning of translation has consequences, of course, for meaning-making activities of all kinds, for translation has itself served as a conventional metaphor or model for a variety of acts of reading, writing, and interpretation; indeed, the analogy between translation and interpretation might profitably be examined in terms of gender, for its use in these discourses surely belies similar issues concerning authority, violence, and power.

The most influential revisionist theory of translation is offered by Jacques Derrida, whose project has been to subvert the very concept of *difference* which produces the binary opposition between an original and its reproduction - and finally to make this difference undecidable. By drawing many of his terms from the lexicon of sexual difference - dissemination, invagination, hymen - Derrida exposes gender as a conceptual framework for definitions of mimesis and fidelity, definitions central to the 'classical' way of viewing translation. The problem of translation, implicit in all of his work, has become increasingly explicit since his essay 'Living On/Border Lines,' the pretexts for which are Shelley's 'Triumph of Life' and Blanchot's *L'Arrêt de mort*.<sup>28</sup> In suggesting the 'intertranslatability' of these texts, he violates conventional attitudes not only toward translation, but also toward influence and authoring.

The essay is on translation in many senses: appearing first in English - that is, in translation - it contains a running footnote on the problems of translating his own ambiguous terms as well as those of Shelley and Blanchot. In the process, he exposes the impossibility of the 'dream of translation without remnants'; there is, he argues, always something left over which blurs the distinctions between original and translation. There is no 'silent' translation. For example, he notes the importance of the words *écrit*, *récit*, and *série* in Blanchot's text and asks:

Note to the translators: How are you going to translate that, *récit*, for example? Not as *nouvelle*, 'novella,' nor as 'short story.' Perhaps it will be better to leave the 'French' word *récit*. It is already hard enough to understand, in Blanchot's text, in French.<sup>29</sup>

The impossibility of translating a word such as *récit* is, according to Derrida, a function of the law of translation, not a matter of the translation's infidelity or secondariness. Translation is governed by a double bind typified by the command, 'Do not read me': the text both requires and forbids its translation. Derrida refers to this double bind of translation as a *hymen*, the sign of both virginity and consummation of a marriage. Thus, in attempting to overthrow the binary oppositions we have seen in other discussions of the problem, Derrida implies that translation is both original and secondary, uncontaminated and transgressed or transgressive. Recognizing too that the translator is frequently a woman – so that sex and the gender-ascribed secondariness of the task frequently coincide – Derrida goes on to argue in *The Ear of the Other* that

the woman translator in this case is not simply subordinated, she is not the author's secretary. She is also the one who is loved by the author and on whose basis alone writing is possible. Translation is writing; that is, it is not translation only in the sense of transcription. It is a productive writing called forth by the original text.<sup>30</sup>

By arguing the interdependence of writing and translating, Derrida subverts the autonomy and privilege of the 'original' text, binding it to an impossible but necessary contract with the translation and making each the debtor of the other.

In emphasizing both the reproductive and productive aspects of translation, Derrida's project – and, ironically, the translation of his works – provides a basis for a necessary exploration of the contradictions of translation and gender. Already his work has generated a collection of essays focusing on translation as a way of talking about philosophy, interpretation, and literary history.<sup>31</sup> These essays, while not explicitly addressing questions of gender, build on his ideas about the doubleness of translation without either idealizing or subordinating translation to conventionally privileged terms. Derrida's own work, however, does not attend closely to the historical or cultural circumstances of specific texts, circumstances that cannot be ignored in investigating the problematics of translation.<sup>32</sup> For example, in some historical periods women were allowed to translate precisely *because* it was defined as a secondary activity.<sup>33</sup> Our task as scholars, then, is to learn to listen to the 'silent' discourse – of women, as translators – in order to better articulate the relationship between what has been coded as 'authoritative' discourse and what is silenced in the fear of disruption or subversion.

Beyond this kind of scholarship, what is required for a feminist theory of translation is a practice governed by what Derrida calls the double bind – not the double standard. Such a theory might rely, not on the family model of oedipal struggle, but on the double-edged razor of translation as

collaboration, where author and translator are seen as working together, both in the cooperative and the subversive sense. This is a model that responds to the concerns voiced by an increasingly audible number of women translators who are beginning to ask, as Suzanne Jill Levine does in her contribution to this anthology, what it means to be a woman translator in and of a male tradition. Speaking specifically of her translation of Cabrera Infante's *La Habana para un infante difunto*, a text that 'mocks women and their words,' she asks,

Where does this leave a woman as translator of such a book? Is she not a double betrayer, to play Echo to this Narcissus, repeating the archetype once again? All who use the mother's father tongue, who echo the ideas and discourse of great men are, in a sense, betrayers: this is the contradiction and compromise of dissidence.

The very choice of texts to work with, then, poses an initial dilemma for the feminist translator: while a text such as Cabrera Infante's may be ideologically offensive, not to translate it would capitulate to that logic which ascribes all power to the original. Levine chooses instead to subvert the text, to play infidelity against infidelity, and to follow out the text's parodic logic. Carol Maier, in discussing the contradictions of her relationship to the Cuban poet Octavio Armand, makes a similar point, arguing that 'the translator's quest is not to silence but to give voice, to make available texts that raise difficult questions and open perspectives. It is essential that as translators women get under the skin of both antagonistic and sympathetic works. They must become independent, "resisting" interpreters who do not only let antagonistic works speak . . . but also speak with them and place them in a larger context by discussing them and the process of their translation.'<sup>34</sup> Her essay recounts her struggle to translate the silencing of the mother in Armand's poetry and how, by 'resisting' her own silencing as a translator, she is able to give voice to the contradictions in Armand's work. By refusing to repress her own voice while speaking *for* the voice of the 'master,' Maier, like Levine, speaks through and against translation. Both of these translators' work illustrates the importance not only of translating but of writing about it, making the principles of a practice part of the dialogue about revising translation. It is only when women translators begin to discuss their work - and when enough historical scholarship on previously silenced women translators has been done - that we will be able to delineate alternatives to the oedipal struggles for the rights of production.

For feminists working on translation, much or even most of the terrain is still uncharted. We can, for example, examine the historical role of translation in women's writing in different periods and cultures; the special problems of translating explicitly feminist texts, as, for example,

in Myriam Diaz-Diocaretz's discussion of the problems of translating Adrienne Rich into Spanish;<sup>35</sup> the effects of the canon and the marketplace on decisions concerning which texts are translated, by whom, and how these translations are marketed; the effects of translations on canon and genre; the role of 'silent' forms of writing such as translation in articulating woman's speech and subverting hegemonic forms of expression. Feminist and poststructuralist theory has encouraged us to read between or outside the lines of the dominant discourse for information about cultural formation and authority; translation can provide a wealth of such information about practices of domination and subversion. In addition, as both Levine's and Maier's comments indicate, one of the challenges for feminist translators is to move beyond questions of the sex of the author or translator. Working within the conventional hierarchies we have already seen, the female translator of a female author's text and the male translator of a male author's text will be bound by the same power relations: what must be subverted is the process by which translation complies with gender constructs. In this sense, a feminist theory of translation will finally be utopic. As women write their own metaphors of cultural production, it may be possible to consider the acts of authoring, creating, or legitimizing a text outside of the gender binaries that have made women, like translations, mistresses of the sort of work that kept Clara Schumann from her composing.

## NOTES

I want to acknowledge and thank the many friends whose conversations with me have helped me clarify my thinking on the subject of this essay: Nancy Armstrong, Michael Davidson, Page duBois, Julie Hemker, Stephanie Jed, Susan Kirkpatrick, and Kathryn Shevelow.

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- 2 This is the title of an essay by Armando S. Pires, *Américas* 4:9 (1952): 13-15, cited in *On Translation*, ed. Reuben A. Brower (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 289.
- 3 United States Code Annotated, Title 17, section 101 (St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing Co., 1977).
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- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- 19 *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 39.
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- 22 In her incisive critique of semiotics argued along these lines, Christine Brooke-Rose makes a similar point about Steiner's use of Lévi-Strauss; see 'Woman as Semiotic Object,' *Poetics Today*, 6 (1985): 9-20; reprinted in *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 305-16.
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- 33 *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, ed. Margaret P. Hannay (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985).
- 34 Carol Maier, 'A Woman in Translation, Reflecting,' *Translation Review*, 17 (1985): 4-8, especially 4.
- 35 Myriam Diaz-Diocaretz, *Translating Poetic Discourse: Questions on Feminist Strategies in Adrienne Rich* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1985). For other work that begins to address the specific problem of gender and translation, see also the special issue of *Translation Review* on women in translation, 17 (1985); and Ronald Christ, 'The Translator's Voice: An Interview with Helen R. Lane,' *Translation Review*, 5 (1980): 6-17.

# TRANSLATION AS (SUB)VERSION: ON TRANSLATING *INFANTE'S INFERNO*

*Suzanne Jill Levine*

A romantic is usually afraid, isn't he, in case reality doesn't come up to expectations.

(Graham Greene, *Our Man in Havana*)

## WORD PLAY

'Faithful poetic translation is an exercise of parallel reveries in two languages,' it has been said. My collaboration with the Cuban (and now British) writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante as his faithfully unfaithful translator (how better to translate *traduttore traditore*?) started out as an exercise of parallel *repartees*, reparteesing one another in English and Spanish, in a two-faced monologue of compulsive punsters. It all began in London where Cabrera Infante was in the throes of destroying *Tres tristes tigres* (1965) with his British collaborator in order to create a young Frankenstein, *Three Trapped Tigers* (1971), a version more than a translation or – as all translations are – another book. The English version of the Joycean recreation of spoken Havanese had to be written, spoken rather, in American English, an idiom full of sounds more in tune with crude Cuban than bloody British, just as Havana was closer geographically, culturally, even racially to New York than to the island-city of Cabrera Infante's exile, exotic London.

As Aristotle in the *Poetics* dictates (in the words of his translator), 'a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars.' If *Three Trapped Tigers* is a 'good metaphor' of *Tres tristes tigres*, it is perhaps because verbal, stylistic affinities between author and collaborator transcended the inevitable language barrier. Cabrera Infante once said I brought to the translation of *TTT* 'that sense of humor characteristic of New York Jews, which is based on play upon words and confronts reality with strict verbal logic.' We had Marx in common, Julius of course: our shared language was the city-wise humor of the



American movies, as well as Lewis Carroll's universe of nonsense: subversive wordplay was our common, if not sacred, ground. As Francis Steegmuller's Flaubert writes, 'Don't we, at bottom, feel just as Chinese as English or French? Aren't all our dreams of foreign places?'<sup>1</sup> ('If you prick us, do we not bleed, etc.?') As translator (traduttrice), I was the willing apprentice of Count Dracula Infante, ready to tread upon his dread Transylvania, to follow him unfaithfully (traditora) into that dimension of the Living Dead, the world of writing. To serf on the surface.

A correspondence, a resemblance despite difference, still held true as we progressed through a third translation (the second was *View of Dawn in the Tropics* [1978]): *La Habana para un infante difunto* (1979). Literally 'Havana for a Dead Infant,' it became in English *Infante's Inferno*, an opportune title because of its parodical, allusive alliteration: this book is a Dantesque voyage into the Havana of Infante's youth, in search of not one but many Beatrices, in search of love, or rather sex: the dead *infante* remains caught in the circles of the hell and heaven of Havana, a memory, a book, an infinite Proustian discourse (which began perhaps in *TTT*) in which the discourse of the memory of Havana (and of the Infante that was) is all that remains. The unfaithful English title is faithful and fateful: Dante ante Infante. On the same note, the treasonous transformation of a female character named Dulce Espina (Sweet Thorn) into Honey Hawthorne alludes faithfully to her essential qualities – sweetness, thorniness, where (Haw)ishness. 'Hawthorne' also brings to bloom other buds: the book's rich allusions to the universe of literature. Cabrera Infante's *inferno* can be seen as an ironic comment on the tradition of romance, within which Hawthorne's Puritan fable on the wages of love (or sex) is inscribed. There is Hawthorne, the absurd British agent in *Our Man in Havana* (the inversion of another absurdist, our Havanian in London perhaps?). And also the thorny motif of the 'hawthorne lane' in the English translation of *À la recherche du temps perdu*,<sup>2</sup> the *locus amoenus* where Marcel first sees Gilberte, which then becomes a nostalgic refrain throughout the volumes: the where thorns of love is certainly a motif Cabrera Infante shares with Proust.

The following excerpt from *Infante's Inferno* is another example (any essay on translation can become an infinite list of examples since theory must be subordinated to practice and since one metaphor inevitably leads to another!) of the seeking of the similar in the dissimilar, where wordplay is inscribed in the language of the translation and yet brings to life the language of the original.

Those were the days when Roberto, born Napoleon, Branly, who joined the group as a specialist in vitreous humor, was said to have a friend named Leo Tiparillo, and another called Chinchilla, and we couldn't tell the surnames from the nicknames, doubting that

Chinchilla's hide was genuine and wondering how many matches it would take to light Tiparillo. I remember the day Branly became notably noticed by Olga Andreu. He came to see her bowl of brand new goldfish, and asked with almost scientific curiosity: 'Are they adults?' But Olga (christened Volgar by Branly) made Branly's game into a set from her settee, a repartee à la Satie:

'Adulterers' – said Olga. 'They're fiendish fish.'

'What are their names?' – asked double Branly: 'Daphne and Chloe?'

'No,' said Olga, 'Debussy and Ravel.'

'Oh, I get it,' said Branly, approaching the golden bowl but not bowled over. 'Debussy must be the one with the flaxen scales.'

'Algae.'

'Olgae?'

'Vegetal filaments that float, vaguely.'

'Are they from the impressionist school of fish?' asked Branly.

'Yes, Debussy even composed *La mer*, an impression.'

'Quite impressive,' Branly said. 'Though I doubt he did it. Nobody at sea composes *La mer* and a goldfish wouldn't compose *The Fishbowl* either, I hasten to add.'

Olga wanted to scare Branly:

'The other one, Ravel, a composer of waltzes and boleros, wrote the *Pavane for a Dead Punster*.'

Branly pretended not to feel the hook and had the last word-fish:

'I suppose that one afternoon Debussy will write *L'après-midi d'un poisson d'or*.'

Branly and Olga's *pasodoble* brings again to your ear's attention this book's alluring alliteration. If the pun was the 'lowly form of wit' that permeated *TTT*, the main 'game' here is alliteration (the translator's typewriter alliterates, driven by the text to write wet wag instead of wet rag, for instance!). An early structural principle in poetry, alliteration has mostly been employed as an emphatic or comic device, as in *Love's Labours Lost*. It is generally considered a lowly device in English poetry and proper prose even more so than in Spanish, a language whose musical exuberance encourages such license.<sup>3</sup> In the baroque aesthetics of writers like Lezama Lima, Severo Sarduy, and Cabrera Infante, alliteration and wordplay are part of a Dionysian destruction of language as transparent communicator: to alliterate is to mock conventions of propriety and to glorify words as mysterious objects: subverting the semantic, putting sound before sense, is a kind of liberation.

Alliteration expresses, frees the impulsive, rhythmic nature of language as music – which it is to the child and to the poet. In poetry, feeling is the meaning. In verbal humor, language's impulsive force

is what dominates, moving the speaker to express what is repressed. Since *Infante's Inferno* is about memory, mostly erotic memories, alliteration – a common mnemonic device for fixing our memories, as in founding fathers and dancing daughters – harmonizes perfectly with its erotic content: alliterating words literally copulate with one another: the repetition of sounds produces a sensual effect, making the reader/translator conscious of an unconscious tendency to use language as music, as children or *infantes* do.

Music, 'the universal language,' is what poetic writing aims to be; as Cabrera Infante's narrator says *à la* Walter Pater at one point, 'all writers aim to be musicians.' Thus he mentions those 'great great' impressionist composers Debussy and Ravel and the avant-garde Satie-Dada's *enfant terrible avant la lettre* – and thus he pays homage to Ravel's title *Pavane pour une infante défunte*. Just as Cabrera Infante, a reveling Ravel of the unraveling word, seeks the music in words, the rumbling rumba rhythm of Havana in his books, so Ravel, a musician, reveals the music in the verbal reality of his title. It was not in homage to any dead Spanish *infanta*, but was chosen for its lilting alliteration, the sonorous beauty of the title reflecting the nostalgic beauty of the parodical pavana.

Maybe Cabrera Infante is a reincarnation of Ravel, Debussy, and Satie all rolled up in one, or perhaps he is their D'Artagnan: he makes fun of Ravel and Debussy in the corny semi-classical Cuban context, because, like Marx and Engels, they could be confused at times, their musical impressions sounding like one long wave – Debussy's *Sea* bubbling out of Ravel's fountain pen by mistake or Ravel's *Valse* being a more strident version of Debussy's *La plus que lente*. But precisely because their parodies or 'translations' of popular forms are both carnivalesque and nostalgic, they have so much in common with the Infante of this *Inferno*, who mocks the Latin male's Don Juan past and his Doñas, but is nostalgic for a lost paradise, which the past always is. As the impressionists created, paradoxically, a very artificial art in their imitations of nature and of popular art, so is this book about how real memories become self-conscious memoirs, more reminiscent of Casanova or *My Secret Life* than of life itself. The repartee *à la* Satie salutes the wit of Satie, the composer as prankster, the unique and eccentric inventor of strange titles, the musician as writer, or vice versa.

This little repartee, filled with those necessary substitutions of one joke for another, of one play of sounds for another, also sums up the continuous battle of words and wits and, metaphorically, of the sexes that is the process of collaboration which we began in *TTT*. It is no small coincidence that of all the women in *Infante's Inferno*, one might identify, as traduttora, with Olga Andreu, practically the only female in

the book who gets to reveal a knack for verbal wit. Many of the other women are more than a match for the male hunter on the sexual battlefield, and at least one is infinitely more clever in the art of emotional manipulation, but Olga is the only, as they say, 'wise guy.' She is a distant, dissonant, and even dissident observer - and one of the few female characters who are not objects of the narrator's often obscure desire. Thus she is a kind of feminine counterpart of the first-person narrator who is more of a near-sighted voyeur than an active participant in his own history as a Cuban Casanova. But more later.

## MARGINALITY

New forms in art are created by the canonization of peripheral forms.

(Viktor Shklovsky)

Since it is at the level of language that the translator can be most creative, inventive, even subversive, I have preferred to translate writers like Cabrera Infante, Manuel Puig, and Severo Sarduy, who play with language, exposing its infidelity to itself, writers who create a new literature by parodying the old. Translation, another form of parody, is for a writer like Cabrera Infante 'a more advanced stage' of the writing of the book, as Jorge Luis Borges once said. Thus, I have had the freedom to exaggerate the parodical elements (such as alliteration) when translating writers like Infante and Puig, particularly because they have been actively involved in the 'subversion' of their originals. (Alliteration also 'contaminated' another book I translated, Sarduy's neobaroque *Maitreya*, bubbling with courtly curtsies, mortified mourners, stark stages, and impeccable arecas.)

Though writers like García Márquez and Vargas Llosa seem more obviously dissident because of their political postures, the more marginal writers, like Puig, Infante, Sarduy, and Reinaldo Arenas, are dissident in a more corrosive manner, digging into the root (route) of hypocrisy, into the very matter in which our consciousness is inscribed, that is, language. Like Lewis Carroll, father of the absurd, Infante, especially the Infante of *TTT*, twists words inside out, revealing their hollow center. Puig exposes our everyday languages, even the language we dream in, as suspect, as concealing what it most intends to reveal. Sarduy renews the avant-garde tradition of poetic prose and obliges us to read a novel as if it were a poem, to surrender to the pleasure of suggestion instead of seeking sense, dancing as he does between the 'earthy feast' of prose and the 'lyrical voyage' of poetry.

Marginality and dissidence are also words that have been used to define

the feminine place in history and culture. Julia Kristeva sees woman's inevitable marginality as an advantage; she aligns woman with the artist, particularly with avant-garde artists.<sup>4</sup> Kristeva claims importance for woman's privileged contact with the mother's body, with the semiotic impulse preceding verbal development and therefore preceding the phase in which, as Lacanians have put it, the phallus becomes the transcendental signifier (in Hitchcockian terms, the Trans-Siberian Express). The term 'mother-tongue' is a deceptive metaphor: mother may be the first to teach the infant speech, but she is only passing onto him or her the father tongue. Once in the realm of verbal discourse, whether or not we are dissident (woman, artist, etc.), we all have to use the 'matter and methods' of the so-called patriarchal code, even if our intention is to question, to parody, to destroy, and to make it over. But even though the dissident may contradict or compromise her/himself by using the very discourse of oppression, as Domna Stanton has written, the 'feminist eye/I can find dissident strands, and combine them in a texture that exposes the phallic intentionality of . . . texts.'<sup>5</sup> To a certain extent, the same could be said for some dissident writing by men: Puig stands out as a writer who exposes the sexual politics implicit in the linguistic code that manipulates us. Kristeva seems to conclude that while some women writers like Hélène Cixous are trying 'to shatter language, to find a specific discourse closer to the body and emotions,' the existence of such a discourse is questionable. She finally opts for woman's dissidence, for feminine subversion as process of becoming, of deferring rather than differing: each individual woman must discover the multiplicity of her possible identifications.

Deferral, diffuseness, plurality, openness are some of the terms used to define uniquely feminine (subversive) writing, as in Gertrude Stein's radical reinventions of literary language or in the Brazilian Clarice Lispector's novelistic portrayals of deferral, of an idealized feminine voice. However, these same terms could apply to the inventions of Laurence Sterne, Macedonio Fernández, Lezama Lima, Severo Sarduy, and Cabrera Infante. In this sense one could say that the translator of writers like these is producing pluralistic, open, diffuse texts much like the 'woman text' of which Cixous has spoken. There is, of course, a difference: *Infante's Inferno*, for example, is a book in which man speaks while woman merely talks.

## MEN SPEAK, WOMEN TALK, BUT BOTH CHAT

In *Infante's Inferno*, woman is essentially an archetype: the mysterious other, a mirror in which Narcissus reflects himself or a screen upon which he projects himself. The final erotic encounter occurs in the Fausto movie theater, the place of screens, that is, of the silver screen and

of 'screen women,' the phantom women in movie theaters whom throughout the book the narrator is trying to seduce or be seduced by. ('Screen woman' is an expression Shoshana Felman has used to characterize the female character in a Balzac story: the girl is a screen for the male protagonist's narcissistic, incestuous fantasies.<sup>6</sup>) The screen-gazing *infante's* final encounter is with a woman who suddenly expands - like Alice when she eats the Wonderland biscuit - into a giant. This giant has been foreshadowed in an early chapter by a huge motherly woman whom the skinny adolescent tries to seduce, only to be interrupted by his brother who informs him that 'this is where we came in,' meaning they had already seen the whole movie. But in this last daydream, which becomes a nightmare, the rite of passage from adolescence to manhood is reversed: the narrator literally enters the vagina, descends into the speculum, crashes through the looking glass, and is swallowed up by this terrifying 'sphinx without a sphincter' (to quote *TTT*). He becomes unborn, a dead infant, finally to be born again upon a 'horizontal abyss,' into the text, as a writer.

This infinite female is, of course, the mother, the gray eminence ruling over the *Inferno*. The mother (as Emir Rodríguez Monegal has suggested<sup>7</sup>) is the one who, unlike the apparently austere father (the son finds out, when he's old enough to know better, that the father has a secret sex life), teaches the *infante* the pleasure of the text, that is, of reading, of movies, music, and conversation. What's more, she gives him his last name, Infante. Just like the mother in Puig's *Betrayed by Rita Hayworth* (also in contrast with an apparently austere father), she is both the source of his language and his introduction to pleasure. If (as Monegal notes) *TTT* is the adult vision/version of Cabrera Infante's Havana and *Inferno* is the adolescent vision, then it is also fitting that the silent or absent center of *TTT* be Laura Díaz, the girl both Arsenio Cué and Silvestre secretly loved, while in *Inferno*, despite all the visible and naked women, the mother, always in the background, is the unifying chord, the ultimate Beatrice. As irreverent as he may be with himself and the women he desires, he always reveres his mother, his ideal woman in every way (even physically). This adult versus adolescent comparison functions on the level of language as well: while *TTT* is curiously elliptical in dealing with the actual sex act, *Infante's Inferno* is unabashedly pornographic, like the language of the adolescent, eager to speak all, less afraid to describe than to experience sex. (One should add, of course, that *TTT's* elliptical aspect was also the result of Spanish censorship at the time the book was published.)

In *Infante's Inferno* the final manipulation of reality (and women) is through language. Like the mythic Narcissus who rejects Echo's caresses, this modern Narcissus only wishes to listen to his Echo. In this sense Cabrera Infante is explicitly exposing the sterility of the archetypal

relationship between man and woman: the narrator is a supremely solitary figure, like the *pavo real*, the peacock from which the *pavane*, a courtly and often solo dance, originates. He is enclosed in his book, in his lonely hall of mirrors like King Christophe; the greatest moment of love, or, rather, orgasm, he experiences, as he says, is through masturbation.

Woman's absence, or silence, and man's speech, however, takes us back to the difference between speech and talk. The metaphoric mother tongue, the language the mother teaches the infant, is actually a 'screen' for the father tongue (just as, on another plane, the father's austerity is a screen for his sexuality, whereas the mother may just be all talk): certainly the Cuban *relajo* which threads through *Infante's Inferno* is a proto-male speech. As Hélène Cixous has suggested, man, out of a double fear of his mother, the fear of losing her and the fear of being castrated by her, has relegated woman to silence, metaphorically decapitating her.<sup>8</sup> She has been consigned to being a mystery, a Sphinx; Cixous writes:

*Chienne chanteuse* ('Watch-bitch') the Sphinx was called: she's an animal and she sings out. She sings out because women do . . . they do utter a little, but they don't speak. Always keep in mind the distinction between speaking and talking. It is said, in philosophical texts, that women's weapon is the word, because they talk endlessly, chatter, overflow with sound . . . but they don't actually *speak*, they have nothing to say.

(p. 49)

Though the narrator in *Infante's Inferno* insists that he prefers the talk of women (beginning with his mother's sewing-circle chatter), it is clear that it is women's talk and not speech he prefers. Indeed, those who do sometimes speak, like Olga, are too terrifying for words.

As to that other alternative, singing, it is interesting that the most significant female character in *TTT* is a singer, La Estrella, just as Sarduy's star transvestite is La Tremenda, an opera singer, a Cuban *chienne chanteuse*. Maitreya swings rhythmically between two poles: singing and 'zingando' ('fornication,' in Cuban slang). La Tremenda is either singing hysterically (or being hysterically silent – silence is the mark of hysteria, says Cixous – because her enemies have silenced her) or seeking the great transcendental signifier. Though for both Sarduy and Cabrera Infante the singer and singing are positive signs of the artist and of music as writing, they both satirize the feminine in the form of a singer. The *Inferno's* Infante mocks women and their words. By satirizing, by reversing the archaic mother in the figure of the fatal Faustine who swallows up the *infante* in the Faust cinema, he perhaps triumphs over his fear of her: the rebirth of the *infante* as a writer is certainly a resolution of sorts. The word is my *apparatus belly* (sic) is what the umbilical narrator might be finally saying.

Where does this leave a woman as translator of such a book? Is she not a double betrayer, to play Echo to this Narcissus, repeating the archetype once again? All who use the mother's father tongue, who echo the ideas and discourse of great men are, in a sense, betrayers: this is the contradiction and compromise of dissidence. Just as Cabrera Infante must use the father tongue to expose it, to parody it. And . . . just as he must learn speech to talk. Because more than anything, *Infante's Inferno* is a chatty, gossipy book. A bumbling Don Juan's jaded talk, the verbal fireworks of Cuban male *relajo* is silly chatter, defying the codes of formal speech. The narrator of this book – which is really a chain of anecdotes – reincarnates finally his mother, the storyteller, the digresser, the pleasure-seeker seeking pleasure only in the telling.

### · TRADUTTORA TRADITORA

If the metaphor 'mother tongue' is deceptive, so is the myth of the *Ursprach*, the original speech (explored by George Steiner in *After Babel*<sup>9</sup>). And just as the existence of that original language is highly problematic, so is the concept of the original text. At least this is what Borges seems to be saying again and again in his fictions, particularly in 'Pierre Menard, Author of the Quijote.' Cabrera Infante confirms this in his *TTT*: there are no originals, only translations. Memory is a text translated into another text. If the sign of translation, of betrayal, ruled over *TTT*, the sign of passage, and therefore translation in a very concrete sense, marks his *Inferno*. Havana is the past, that is, 'another country'; the infant is dead (or there never was one, as in Ravel's *Pavane*); what remains is the telling or the translating.

That *Infante's Inferno* is a version, a subversion, is already apparent in the title. What is alive in *La Habana para un infante difunto* would become truly dead in the literal *Havana for a Dead Infant*. Because of what is lost and can be gained in crossing the language barrier, because of the inevitable rereading that occurs in transposing a text from one context to another, a translation must subvert the original. When the Havana narrator makes the jaded statement 'no one man can rape a woman,' the infernal translator undermines this popular myth with the book's own corrosive mechanism of alliteration and writes: 'no wee man can rape a woman.' Since *La Habana para un infante difunto* mocks popular sexual mythology, subverts traditional narrative, and sets verbal reality above all others, the more subversive *Infante's Inferno* is, the better. Verbal logic supplants fidelity when 'fines de siglo' is translated not as 'turn of the century' but as the 'gay nineties,' or when 'Amor Propio' (the title initiating a chapter in praise of masturbation) is translated not as *amour-propre*, 'Self-Esteem' or 'Self-Love,' but as 'Love Thyself.' (After all, the Bible is the book of books!) And the text continues



to metamorphose blasphemously into another text when the following chapter (about the narrator's pursuit of women in movie theaters) is titled 'Love Thy Neighbor' instead of 'False Love,' a literal translation of the Spanish saying 'Amor trompero' (the original chapter title).

A final example of this crafty craft of transferring metaphors from the Cuban to American English is the translation of the chapter title 'Mi último fracaso' ('My Last Failure') into 'You Always Can Tell.' This section deals with the common theme of an adolescent's sexual initiation, in this case the narrator's misadventures in striptease joints and brothels and his final quasi-successful intercourse with a streetwalker. As he takes leave of this girl, she is saying to him that she didn't think she'd have any customers that night, and he answers 'you see?' so that she can complete the phrase with the line from a song (in Spanish): 'You never know,' and then he thinks an answer to her answer, but doesn't say it: it's another line from another *bolero*: 'You will be my last failure.' In the Spanish, 'My Last Failure,' corresponding to the popular theme of the chapter, is the perfect title. In English, however, 'My Last Failure' does not have the same resonance, does not evoke a song or singer (in this case, Olga Guillot) that the Cuban reader would immediately recognize in the Spanish version. A literal translation would betray the intention of these words. 'Better Late Than Never' was considered since it is a cliché, a popular saying which could epitomize the character's final participation in sexual intercourse after talking about it for 300 pages. 'This Is Where I Came In' could also have been a *double entendre* with a single sense, but neither worked as a casual phrase at the end of the chapter, thus serving as a *leitmotif* that would give unity to the chapter. Then came the possibility of 'You Never Can Tell,' which works well as the phrase the girl utters at the end (changing 'You never know' to 'You never can tell'). But since the final phrase has to be the character's mental repartee, 'you always can tell' works well as an ironic echo, the narrator being a constant Echo of his own narcissistic obsessions. Again, 'You Always Can Tell' covers a multitude of sins: the character automatically approaches the streetwalker not knowing, but somehow instinctively knowing, that she is a streetwalker, thus, 'you always can tell.' Second, 'Mi último fracaso' is an ironic title because his encounter with her is and is not a failure; like 'Mi último fracaso,' 'You Always Can Tell' is an affirmation which counterpoints the negative 'You Never Can Tell' and the uncertainties of sexual initiation. Finally, 'Mi último fracaso' recalls another text, a song, just as the title of *La Habana* recalls the Ravel title, thus asserting the precedence of the verbal, of the literary, over a reality being described. You always can *tell*, a mis-quotation from the lexicon of clichés, very much emphasizes the *telling* of this story of sexual initiation in which the narrator tells all he can, and he can always *tell* (even when he cannot always *do*): the verbal precedes, substitutes, is the action.

Renato Poggioli expressed most aptly the reason for translating modern works when he remarked that 'the modern translator, like the modern artist, strives after self-expression, although the self-expression may well be a not too literal expression of the self.'<sup>10</sup> *Infante's Inferno*, a book whose content is oppressively male, could never be a literal expression of this translator's self. However, translation – an activity caught between the scholarly and the creative, between the rational and the intuitive – is a route, a voyage if you like, through which a writer/translator may seek to reconcile fragments: fragments of texts, of language, of oneself. More than a moment of interpretation, translation is a (w)rite of passage.

## NOTES

- 1 *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert, 1830–1857*, ed. and trans. Francis Steegmuller (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 87.
- 2 Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: Vintage, 1981).
- 3 In John Felstiner's autobiographical essay about translating Neruda, *The Way to Macchu Picchu*, he finds it necessary to justify his use of alliteration, saying: 'In almost any other context, "grinding stone stamens with a stick" would create an inexcusable alliteration, but here that very insistence reinforces Neruda's need to work his way into the very making of the city.' Unconsciously or not, Felstiner himself alliterates in 'Neruda's need to work his way'; but more important, the prejudice behind his 'inexcusable' seems misguided, particularly in the context of translating Spanish to English. Spanish is a very alliterative language, and the English translator should employ whatever musical devices he or she can in order at least to suggest the lyricism of the original language. John Felstiner, *Translating Neruda: The Way to Macchu Picchu* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), p. 185.
- 4 Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time,' trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, *Signs*, 7 (1981): 21, 24–5.
- 5 Domna Stanton, 'The Fiction of *Preciosité* and the Fear of Women,' *Yale French Studies*, 62 (1981): 107.
- 6 Shoshana Felman, 'Rereading Femininity,' *Yale French Studies*, 62 (1981): 29.
- 7 Emir Rodríguez Monegal, 'GCI: La novela como autobiografía total,' *Revista Iberoamericana*, 116–17 (1981): 265–72.
- 8 Hélène Cixous, 'Castration or Decapitation?' trans. Annette Kuhn, *Signs*, 7 (1981): 49. See also Leyla Perrone-Moisés, 'L'infant dans la glace ou Don Juan en Amérique latine,' *Cahiers Confrontation*, 6 (1981): 47–55, for a discussion of misogyny in the manipulation of language in *Infante's Inferno*.
- 9 George Steiner, *After Babel* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 58, 59.
- 10 Renato Poggioli, 'The Added Artificer,' in *On Translation*, ed. Reuben A. Brower (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 139.

# MERRILL'S VALÉRY: AN EROTICS OF TRANSLATION

*Jeffrey Mehlman*

On the second page of *Recitative*, his deftly titled volume of prose reflections, James Merrill offers something in the order of a myth of the birth of the poet. The circumstance is a story told him as a child by 'Mademoiselle,' his adored governess, a woman neither French nor Belgian (as she pretended), but, to her 'undying shame,' Prussian. Merrill, in 1982, recounted her tale:

Having to relieve herself at a border checkpoint during the war, Mademoiselle had overlaid the 'infecte' toilet seat with some family letters she happened to be carrying in her purse. In the course of the 'formalities' her innocent buttocks were bared by a uniformed matron and found to be stenciled with suspicious mirror writing, which triggered a long and humiliating interrogation. '*Figure-toi!*' she exclaimed, gravely fixing me through her gold-rimmed spectacles. I could indeed imagine. I too was being imprinted, there and then.<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle's exclamation, that is, as drunk in by the boy, is something of a categorical imperative: Go forth and figure thyself! And that figuration – or 'imprinting' – is by implication a version of the 'mirror' script on the governess's buttocks. To be a poet, it would seem, would be above all to be the inventive recipient, scribe, or surface of a message received from elsewhere, alive to the possibilities opened up by its misinterpretation. And to that extent Merrill-as-poet would be more akin to the customs officials than the governess herself. Just as the story's piquancy lay in their misreading the import of the essentially meaningless writing on her buttocks, so his emergence as a poet would lie in his own misconstruing of the seemingly unredeemable cliché, '*Figure-toi!*' Destiny is less anatomy here than mistranslation.

And yet anatomy, in the governess's tale, is of the essence. If the familial script on the buttocks is semantically nil, pragmatically it bears with it an apparently irreducible charge of humiliation, and it is the imprint of that humiliation which the poet Merrill would take up as the burden of his poetry. On the one hand, then, we are presented with a

script voided in its meaning, misread as meaningful, and insistent only as the tension between two languages and cultures (French and German), as the difference emblemized by nothing so much as the border location of the episode. On the other, though, there is the corporeal humiliation imbedded through and embodied by that very script. That the entire trauma - of the other - is simultaneously a prodigious joke or *Witz* (lost on the governess's young listener) may lead us to read in the episode not simply a myth of the birth of the poet but a myth of the genesis of the unconscious as well. In both dimensions, mistranslation would appear to be of the essence.

Yet what if the chain of ingenious misreadings (the border guards of the script, young Merrill of 'Figure-toil') were not *contained* by the episode as recounted by Merrill, but englobed that recounting itself? Consider the bare components of the episode: governess and child, bared buttocks, humiliation. Those three elements, isolated from Merrill's elaboration, constitute something in the order of a 'primal' scene or fantasy, to which a title such as 'Caught-In-The-Act' might perhaps be applied. But it is enough to perceive as much to be tempted to entertain the possibility that Merrill's entire myth (of the birth of the poet) may be read as belonging to the genre of what Freud called 'screen-memories': intensely remembered but illusory scenes from childhood whose function is to conceal and perpetuate fundamental unconscious fantasies.<sup>2</sup> From the boy caught-in-the-act by the governess to the boy being told of the governess being caught in the course of an act she never performed, the displacement is eloquent in its virtuality. What remains to be ascertained is whether that virtuality is anything more than an intriguing (or embarrassing) projection of the critic.

Consider the major poem 'Lost in Translation,' the last in Merrill's collected poems, in this context.<sup>3</sup> Like the initial tale of the prose volume, it is centered on Mademoiselle, the poet's muse of translation. The poem is an assemblage of interlocking fragments or sequences, nodes from different moments of the poet's life, which emerge as nothing so much as retranslations of each other. The principal fragment is an evocation of the bored child, suffering under the weight of parental absence and discord, and elated at the arrival of a jigsaw puzzle whose fragments he will spend a good deal of the poem putting together. This sequence is presided over, and linked to translation, by 'Mademoiselle,' whose 'French hopes' and 'German fears' at the time of the outbreak of World War II are eloquently hinted at. Merrill here comes remarkably close to Walter Benjamin's metaphor of translation as the assembling of 'fragments of a vessel' whose pieces are said to 'match one another in the smallest details.'<sup>4</sup> The translator's ultimate indifference to sense (*pace* Benjamin), the reconstitution of meaning as an after-effect of the successful assemblage of signifying elements, is splendidly evoked in the

boy's aligning of jigsaw pieces without regard to the visible *subject* of the puzzle ('The plot thickens / As all at once two pieces interlock').

The second of the contrapuntally linked sequences is prepared for by Mademoiselle's bilingual calls to patience: 'Patience, chéri. Geduld, mein Schatz.' For it opens onto the poet's 'seeming' recollection of a Rilke version of the last of Valéry's *Charmes*, 'Palme.'<sup>5</sup> There is a thematic link here, since Valéry too made of his tree an emblem of fruitful 'Patience dans l'azur.' But the more interesting link is structural. For the motif of the unfindable Rilke translation of Valéry comes to interlock with that of the irreducibly missing piece to every puzzle. This begins with the lost 'feet' of the page-boy pictured in the puzzle, an Oriental tableau by a disciple of Gérôme. Those feet show up 'under the table all along' – presumably right where the (future) poet's feet were 'all along.' So that the motif of the missing piece (or impossible closure) is aligned with that of undecidability. But even after the feet have been 'retrieved,' and the puzzle completed, something remains missing:

Something tells me that one piece contrived  
To stay in the boy's pocket. How do I know?  
I know because so many later puzzles  
Had missing pieces

And there follows a list of disparate losses. The penultimate is the 'pitiful bit of truth' about Mademoiselle's shared French *and* German loyalties, the 'shameful secret' she kept until the end. As though the border guard in the prose tale was never closer to the truth than in ludicrously misconstruing the mirror writing on Mademoiselle's buttocks: reconfirmation that that myth of the birth of the poet was also a myth of the genesis of the unconscious. But the final element in the series is the unlocatable Rilke translation of 'Palme.' The series of the 'unconscious,' that is, has taken us from feet to hand – presumably the missing piece remaining in the boy's pocket – and one wonders whether the concluding 'palm' is not at some level that of the detached hand itself. 'Innocently branching palm,' on the other hand (or foot), is also offered as one of the characteristic 'sandal-scented' shapes of the puzzle. As such 'palm' would appear to constitute an eruption, at the level of the signified of Merrill's puzzling poem, of the signifier itself – perhaps, given its instability, a poetic equivalent of what Lévi-Strauss called the 'floating signifier.'<sup>6</sup>

The third and final sequence to appear in the poem is the most enigmatic. 'December last,' a medium is said to enter a library and hear or hallucinate the 'dry saw-shriek' of a lumber mill drowning out his 'voices.' The presence of the medium is a reminder of the extent to which 'Lost in Translation,' a poem roughly contemporaneous with the first part of *The Changing Light at Sandover* and originally appearing with it in a volume entitled *Divine Comedies*, is integrally linked to that major

project.<sup>7</sup> For the title and presumptive moral of the poem ('all is translation / And every bit of us is lost in it') seem attuned to the fantasia of metempsychosis (or intertextuality) dominating Merrill's *magnum opus*, even as the joint labors at the jigsaw puzzle (on its card table) seem a prefiguration of those at the Ouija board.<sup>8</sup> And the boy's assembling or 'putting together Heaven' resonates tellingly with the Dantesque aspirations of the later work. But beyond these affinities, the saw-shriek at the lumber mill complicates the internal economy of 'Lost in Translation' itself:

Far uphill in the fir forest  
 Trees tower, tense with shock,  
 Groaning and cracking as they crash groundward.  
 But hidden here is a freak fragment  
 Of a pattern complex in appearance only.

The intuition this leads to is said to be of the 'karma that has / Made it matter in the first place. / Plywood, Piece of a puzzle.' But if this sequence at some level 'translates' the others, the erect 'palm,' 'freak fragment' *par excellence*, is inseparable from the crash groundward of the medium's trees. Even as the undoing or 'rattling down' of the jigsaw pieces - 'a populace / Unstitched of its attachments' - once the puzzle has been completed seems inseparable from its descent or arrival 'out of the blue' of a puzzle-rental shop in the first place. Perhaps the irreducibility or 'freakiness' of the 'freak fragment' is best considered in the light of this non-identity to self characterizing Merrill's 'palm.'

The most telling gloss on 'Lost in Translation' no doubt occurs in a review Merrill wrote of Allen Mandelbaum's translation of Dante. For Dante is for him preeminently a poet of evanescent points: 'A children's book comes to mind - "Adventures of a Hole" or whatever - where the small round "hero" piercing the volume from front to back serves as focus to the picture on every page.'<sup>9</sup> In such manner would Dante, in each passing episode, connect 'with absolute Good - or Evil.' But to that extent 'Lost in Translation's' series of missing fragments - feet, hand (or piece in pocket), and/or 'palm,' along with the 'pitiful bit of truth' held back, figure of an unconscious - seems a secularization of Merrill's image of the *Commedia*. Now of all the missed points in the *Inferno*, the central one, at the pit of hell, is the one before which Dante, clambering down between the floor of ice and Satan's shaggy thigh, averts his eye. Merrill, so predisposed, as he tells us in *Sandover*, to Jung, quotes Freud at this point and interprets this 'missed point' or 'black hole' as the absence of Satan's genitals: 'For surely this point in hell is where they would have been and are not.'<sup>10</sup> But that means that the Rilke-Valéry 'palm,' as the missing fragment *par excellence* of Merrill's poem, is a castration equivalent. Whereupon, (as) in the logic of the poem, 'all at once two

pieces interlock': the lines 'sunlit paradigm whereby the tree / Taps a sweet wellspring of authority' and 'highly colored / Evidence the Law must piece together.' The threat of castration, that is, is the psychical 'wellspring of authority' and source of the 'Law.'

Now this configuration is further complicated (and enriched) by the fact that Merrill subsequently composed a superb translation of Valéry's 'Palme,' appearing, under the title 'Paul Valéry: *Palme*,' in the poet's 1985 collection *Late Settings*.<sup>11</sup> A consideration of the disparities between the French and the English will cast some light on our speculative reading of 'Lost in Translation.' The Valéry poem, something of a parable of poetic creation, is itself perhaps best broached in spatial terms. The object of the poet's fascination is a palm-branch, atop its tree, wavering under the weight of its fruit. For whereas the primary meaning of 'palm' in English is no doubt 'palm-tree,' French reserves the word *palmier* for the tree and *palme* for the branch. Now against an implied axis of ideal verticality (between heaven and earth) the differential movement of the wavering palm-branch angelically generates the erotically and poetically charged temporality of the poem. Gradually the dimension of verticality (or ideality) itself is engendered, almost after the fact, by the simultaneous release of a downpour of fruit and rise heavenward of the newly unburdened tree. Valéry, in brief, gives us a deferred genesis of the ideal as secondary to primordial difference.

Compare now Merrill's version. Valéry's poem begins with an angel barely veiling his brilliance (*voilant à peine son éclat*). Presumably this is the palm or palm-branch itself, the focus of the poem, imagined as an angel-wing intermittently shielding the poet's eyes from the morning sun. Valéry continues:

Il me fait de la paupière  
Le signe d'une prière  
Qui parle à ma vision:

Merrill writes:

His eyelids make the sign  
Of prayer; I lower mine,  
Words interleaving vision:

The invention 'I lower mine' does more than sustain the rhyme. It quirkily removes the poem's focus, the necessarily elevated palm-branch, from the poet's line of sight and introduces a valence of shame utterly absent from Valéry. The angel's monologue, which constitutes the rest of the poem, begins as follows in the French:

Calme, calme, reste calme!  
Connais le poids d'une palme

Portant sa profusion!

And in the English:

- Calm, calm, be ever calm!  
 Feel the whole weight a palm  
 Bears upright in profusion.

Here the anomaly is the word 'upright.' For whereas Valéry would have us sense the downward pull and incipient wavering of the branch under the weight of the fruit, Merrill's palm, in its erectness, seems almost more tree than branch. This impression is underscored in the second stanza. In the French:

Pour autant qu'elle se plie  
 A l'abondance des biens,  
 Sa figure est accomplie,  
 Ses fruits lourds sont ses liens  
 Admire comme elle vibre

In Merrill's rendering, this becomes:

However its boughs yield  
 Beneath abundance, it  
 Is formally fulfilled  
 In bondage to thick fruit.  
 Wonder and see it grow!

Here plainly the wavering movement of the palm-branch (Rilke calls it 'ihr schwebendes Beben') has been sacrificed to the (vertical) growth of the tree. Merrill, having replaced the verb *vibrer* with *to grow*, ingeniously smuggles the lost valence in the following line ('One fiber, vibrant, slow'), but without actually redeeming its centrality. The process continues in the third stanza. Valéry:

Autour d'une même place  
 L'ample palme ne se lasse  
 Des appels ni des adieux . . .  
 Qu'elle est noble, qu'elle est tendre!  
 Qu'elle est digne de s'attendre  
 A la seule main des dieux!

And Merrill:

Unstintingly to suffer  
 Hails and farewells, forever  
 Standing where it must stand . . .  
 How noble and how tender  
 How worthy of surrender



To none but a god's hand!

Here one is struck by the erectness of 'standing,' more proper for the tree than the branch, and its stabilization of the wavering 'autour d'une même place.' But more noteworthy still is the singular 'god's hand' replacing 'la seule main des dieux.' For where the French is necessarily abstract, and implies no more than 'intervention' (for what might the hand of multiple gods look like?), the English, with its single lower-case god, invites consideration of his hand in its very physicality, perhaps even in the detail of its . . . palm.

Consider the path that has brought us to this hypothesis. From the crucially absent Rilke translation of Valéry's 'Palme,' the concluding poem in his volume *Charmes*, we moved to the motif of the missed 'point' in Merrill's essay on the Mandelbaum translation of Dante and specifically to his assimilation of the final instance of that missing instance to the absent genitals of Satan in the *Inferno*. In turning to Merrill's own version of 'Palme,' we observed the characteristic gesture in the first stanzas to be the displacement of a differential wavering to a fantasy of vertical growth or erectness. Along with the palm as metaphor of erect phallus, however, has come (in the third strophe) the metonym of palm as (masturbatory) hand. All of which allows the 'palm' of Merrill's version to figure at once the two components of the masturbatory scenario along with its classical Freudian punishment: castration. Lest this interpretation seem arbitrary consider the rest of the translation. In the fourth stanza:

Une voix impérissable  
Qu'elle rend au vent de sable  
Qui l'arrose de ses grains,  
A soi-même sert d'oracle

becomes in English:

This tree's undying voice  
Upraised in the wind's hiss,  
As fine sand sprays and stings,  
To its own self is oracle

Once again erect (or 'upraised') tree replaces wavering branch - and the music it restores to the wind. And to the extent the tree's voice for Merrill is independent of the wind the autoerotic motif emerges all the more strongly. Whereupon:

Held in an artless dream  
Between blue sky and dune,  
Secreting, dram by dram,  
The honey of each noon

The verb 'secrete' here replaces the far less physiological 'composer' ('Lui compose un peu de miel'). Time, in Valéry, is all but emitted in the golden light of the palm. Merrill continues:

What is this delectation  
If not divine duration  
That, without keeping time,  
Can alter it, seduce  
Into a steady juice  
Love's volatile perfume?

Merrill's translation (or 'palm'), that is, in this stanza prepares an ejaculation which the context establishes as masturbatory. 'Paul Valéry: *Palme*' is simultaneously an accomplished statement of love for Valéry's poem and a subtle betrayal of that love. And the measure of that betrayal is inseparable from the extent to which Merrill's version may be read as a fantasia of masturbation.

The remainder of the poem, precisely to the extent that Valéry himself has by this point modulated from differential wavering to a fantasy of communion between idealized heights and depths ('l'eau profonde que demandent les sommets'), is substantially respected by Merrill. Indeed 'shaggy systems' may even shy away from the French 'substance chevelue,' the hairy base of the erect tree. When the ejaculation - of fruit, liberating the palm-branch from its weight - finally occurs (the 'downpour' in Merrill which brings 'you to your knees') the effect is a bit more sadistic in English:

Let populations be  
Crumbled underfoot -  
Palm, irresistibly -  
Among celestial fruit!

than in French:

Qu'un peuple à present s'écroule,  
Palme! . . . irrésistiblement!  
Dans la poudre qu'il se roule  
Sur les fruits du firmament!

As though the bough's 'bondage to thick fruit' in the second stanza came with its own erotic baggage . . . What is most crucial is that however successful Merrill's English may be in rendering the parable's paradoxical conclusion:

Those hours were not in vain  
So long as you retain  
A lightness once they're lost;

Like one who, thinking, spends  
 His inmost dividends  
 To grow at any cost

the moral drawn by Valéry is not quite adequate to Merrill's version, since in the English, the final growth (through 'expenditure') is not a new and paradoxical occurrence, but a repetition of what had already been served the reader near the poem's beginning, when branch was apparently displaced by tree in the line: 'Wonder and see it grow!'

But a translation of 'Palme,' although subtended by a fantasy of masturbation in 'Paul Valéry: *Palme*,' was the emblem of a fantasy of castration (the crucially missing piece) in 'Lost in Translation.' And the apparent congruence between the 'rattling down' of puzzle pieces in the poem and the ejaculatory 'downpour' of palm-fruit in the translation suggests that the two fantasies at some level may be one. The occurrence of such a full-blown (or two-pronged) fantasia invites one to speculate on the structuring role of the translation of Valéry in Merrill's work. For 'castration,' in Freud's version of Sophocles (as in Merrill's of Dante), is endowed with supreme architectonic value. And yet we have seen that the Merrill translation was, for all its aplomb, a mistranslation: the wavering of the palm-branch had been sacrificed to the marvelous growth of the tree. Unless, of course, what were most crucial in that differential wavering were captured in the implicit doubling of the signifier 'palm' - which in English alone can be made to assume the valences of the French *palmier* and *palme*. At bottom, the wavering *palme* would figure the double inscription of the signifier, its own lack of identity with itself. In this respect, 'palm' in Merrill would play a role analogous to 'auto-erotism' in Freud: on the one hand, a metaphor for a sexuality aberrant in its masturbatory proclivities, on the other, a metonym for the coefficient of fantasy (or double inscription) in all sexuality.<sup>12</sup> Such, for example, would be the upshot of a reading of the generative role of the word 'palm' (as frond, hand, award, tree, and - etymologically - phoenix) in Merrill's recent major poem on the twin callings of 'actor and lover,' 'A Room at the Heart of Things.'<sup>13</sup>

The question of 'Palme,' the translation of Valéry, and the problematic of castration in Merrill's writing, however, is perhaps best broached through the most Oedipal of Valéry's own poems, 'Le Cimetière marin,' and what I take to be its oblique translation by Merrill, the long poem 'Santorini: Stopping the Leak.'<sup>14</sup> That 'translation,' moreover, is one in precisely the sense evoked by Benjamin when he paired the art of translation and the critique of cognition (*Erkenntniskritik*) based on image theories of language.<sup>15</sup> For it is Merrill's translation that best underscores the stratum of Valéry's own poem construable as just such an *Erkenntniskritik*.

But first a few observations about 'Le Cimetière marin,' and specifically its implicit relation to 'Palme.' We have seen the latter poem all but generate the binary ideals of sheer height ('les sommets') and depth ('l'eau profonde') through a movement of difference ('Admire comme elle vibre') prior to that very opposition. In many ways, 'Le Cimetière marin' compounds that very configuration. In its evocation of the poet in the seaside cemetery on a hill overlooking the Mediterranean at high noon, the poem appears to play itself out in a tripolar world: among sea, sun, and (buried) skull. In fact, however, the triangle mediates two overlapping binary oppositions: an axis of what the poem, in a Latinate moment, calls 'altitude,' between the extremes of height (sun) and depth (sea); and one best epitomized in terms of activity-passivity, with the noonday sun emblematic of ideal potency (or activity) and the cemetery's skull incarnating a principle of utter impotence (or passivity). What remains to be ascertained in the case of each axis or opposition is the precise instance corresponding to the wavering difference of 'Palme.' To that end I shall treat each opposition separately and briefly refer to the conclusions of a reading of the poem I have conducted elsewhere.<sup>16</sup>

The poet's initial empowering vision is of the surface of the sea brilliant with noonday sun:

Midi le juste y compose de feux  
La mer, la mer toujours recommencée!

Before long, however, that vision has been transformed into the surprising metaphor of a retentive eye:

Stable trésor, temple simple à Minerve,  
Masse de calme et visible réserve,  
Eau sourcilleuse, Oeil qui garde en toi  
Tant de sommeil sous un voile de flamme

Now the image of the retentive eye in Valéry inevitably conducts the reader back to Valéry's nodal poem (or 'involuntary *Aeneid*') 'La jeune Parque.'<sup>17</sup> For that poem, focusing as it does on the threat to self-mastery or bodily integrity experienced by the young Parque as she awakens to find herself shedding a tear of unknown provenance, may be read as finding its emblem in the tear itself. The apparently unwanted poem – poetry as unwanted for reason of the threat it posed to Intelligence – is effectively allegorized in the apparently unwanted tear. And the force of that equivalence may be demonstrated as it works its way through the liquid emissions in (and of) such poems as 'Le Vin perdu,' 'Les Grenades,' and 'L'Abeille.'<sup>18</sup> But the retentive eye in 'Le Cimetière marin,' precisely to the extent that its fascinating surface is inscribed as 'la mer, la mer toujours recommencée,' invites anagrammatization as 'LARME, LARME, toujours recommencée.' The differential wavering in

'Palme,' that is, corresponds in this instance to the superficial entity or tear (LARME-LA MER) constituting, for the entirety of Valéry's poetry, the repressed *par excellence*. 'Dram by dram,' to recall the idiom of Merrill's translation, the 'tear-work' is no doubt also at work in 'Palme.' Or, to invoke the meditations of Valéry's *Cahiers*, the palm is 'infiniment voisin de la source des larmes.'<sup>19</sup>

If sun is opposed to sea (on the axis of 'altitude'), it is simultaneously pitted against funereal skull (or cemetery) on the axis of activity-passivity. The sun's:

Tête complète et parfait diadème

finds its pendant in:

Pères profonds, têtes inhabitées.

Even as:

Midi là-haut, Midi sans mouvement

is joined by its specular opposite:

Allez! Tout fuit! Ma présence est poreuse.

Now oddly enough, these two extremes - of mobility and immobility, or passivity and active strength - are seen to be complicitous:

Mais dans leur nuit toute lourde de marbres,  
Un peuple vague aux racines des arbres  
A pris déjà ton parti lentement.

The dead in their darkness, that is, have turned out to be partisans of the sun - or luminosity - itself. The lines, with their allusion to tree roots, effectively repeat a key passage from 'Palme' (with its allusion to mortal 'shades'):

La substance chevelue  
Par les ténèbres élue  
Ne peut s'arrêter jamais,  
Jusqu'aux entrailles du monde,  
De poursuivre l'eau profonde  
Que demandent les sommets.

But that fact in turn leads us to ask what such complicity conceals or represses, what in this case corresponds to the differential 'vibration' of the palm-branch. Valéry's most explicit answer appears in the stanzas XIX-XXI, culminating in the famous evocation of Zeno's paradox. Pitted against death itself is the true nemesis or parasite ('le ver irréfutable'): 'Il vit de vie, il ne me quitte pas.' Whereupon:

Zénon! Cruel Zénon! Zénon d'Elée!  
 M'as-tu percé de cette flèche ailée  
 Qui vibre, vole, et qui ne vole pas!  
 Le son m'enfante et la flèche me tue!  
 Ah! le soleil . . . Quel ombre de tortue  
 Pour l'âme, Achille immobile à grands pas!

The allusion is, of course, to Zeno's sophistical denial of motion: given the infinite divisibility of space it would take Achilles an infinite amount of time to catch up with the tortoise, however finite the latter's head start. The vibrating arrow that flies even as it doesn't figures less a denial of movement than of that opposition between mobility and immobility – cemetery and sun – on which much of the poem seems based. As such it is an adequate image for that very repetition-in-difference which is the medium of what I have called Valéry's 'tear-work' (or the tear-work's 'Valéry'). Beyond that the ineradicable parasite appears to have secured a corporeal foothold – in Achilles' foot. For, to return to our broader context of a speculative English translation of Valéry, it is probably impossible for an English reader to hear the French 'Achille immobile' in the context of this evocation of an immobilizing defect (albeit a logical one) in Achilles' stride, without subliminally invoking Achilles' 'heel.' Intercepting and disrupting the axis of activity-passivity we thus find a parasite ('*ver irréfutable*') on a foot (the heel of 'Achille immobile'). That instance in turn corresponds to the tear (LARME) generating even as it represses the axis of 'altitude' or sun on sea. And a significant enigma of Valéry interpretation might well be formulated as the precise nature of that correspondence.

But it is that correspondence which is in many ways the implicit or metaphorical focus of Merrill's dramatic poem, 'Santorini: Stopping the Leak.' It is, to be sure, a highly idiosyncratic work, but at the same time, I hope to show, something of a translation *qua* analysis of 'Le Cimetière marin.' Unless the Merrill poem, to resort to a conceit used in *The Changing Light at Sandover* with regard to Rimbaud and 'The Waste Land,' were at some level 'ghost-written' by Valéry . . .

The poetic world of 'Santorini,' for the most part, is evoked within a triangular configuration remarkably close to Valéry's. The poet's visit to the Greek volcanic isle situates him within a tripartite structure of sun, sea, and dormant crater. Regarding sun on sea, Merrill initially evokes the 'pewter glare of the September sea,' but gradually adjusts his image until it all but coincides with Valéry's:

Midi le juste y compose de feux  
 La mer, la mer toujours recommencée.

In Merrill, this becomes:

deep salt blue  
Unripppling oval noon sun peers into.

If, moreover, the sun-on-sea axis seemed secretly to allude to (or repress) 'La Jeune Parque' and her trauma, the Parcae - or their absence - are there in the surface of 'Santorini.' The motif appears early in the poem:

It seems  
We come provided with an introduction  
To three old maiden sisters here, who set  
A table that exceeds her [Nelly's] wildest dreams  
Of gourmandise. The ladies must be met

The encounter with the Parcae, however, never materializes:

because a civil note  
Had come by hand, before the morning mail,  
Professing the three sisters 'desolate'  
(One with lumbago, one with a sore throat,  
The third with friends in Athens - well, that's Fate)  
Not to receive us

These Parcae, then, given their Anglicized French ('desolate' for *désolé*), are at some level 'Parques,' and 'Santorini' is as informed by their eclipse as 'Le Cimetière marin' is by the suppressed tear of their fabled junior.

If the sun-sea vector, as perceived by the poet perched on high ('this despaired-of-from-below / Village unmelted on the crest like snow'), binds the poet of 'Santorini' to that of 'Le Cimetière,' a still deeper bond is forged along the other dialectical axis, that establishing a complicity between sun and extinct crater. For the Merrill poem too is first of all a meditation on the intensity of luminosity:

Inches overhead, a blue that burns,  
That all but blackens - heaven as a flue? -  
Against this white that all but calcifies.

But it is an intensity that dissolves the human form that would contain it.  
Hence Valéry:

Comme le fruit se fond en jouissance,  
Comme en délice il change son absence  
Dans une bouche où sa forme se meurt

Transcribed by Merrill:

with nothingness  
Threatening forever to unmake  
The living form it sees through in a trice

Now ultimately the destructive force of the sun is linked to its counter-image, the now dormant volcano. And the humanly devastating complicity between the two parallels that between the 'tête complète' and 'têtes inhabitées' of Valéry's sun and cemetery. In Merrill's words:

Innermost chaos understood at first  
 As Gaia's long-pent-up emotions crippling  
 Her sun-thrilled body, spun to the great Lyre;  
 Pent up, but all too soon unleashed - outburst  
 Savage enough to bury in its fire  
 The pendant charms she wore, palace and stripling,  
 A molten afterbirth transmuting these  
 Till Oedipus became Empedocles -

Leaper headlong into that primal scene

Through its volcano, Santorini had been releasing the pent-up energies of the sun itself. And man would appear to be undone by the secret complicity between the two. Just as Valéry's dead appear to join forces against life with the sun itself, Merrill's crater is destructive to the extent that it has been 'sun-thrilled.' And just as Valéry, at his father's grave, leaves behind Oedipal motifs to make himself vulnerable to a solar drama:

L'âme exposée aux torches du solstice,  
 Je te soutiens, admirable justice  
 De la lumière aux armes sans pitié!

Merrill stages a 'primal scene' in which Oedipus is supplanted by Empedocles leaping to a fiery death. Finally, it is precisely Valéry's combination of luminous threat and sensual intensity that Merrill captures in:

could a soul that clung  
 To its own fusing senses crawl at last  
 Away unshriveled by the holocaust?

Now in 'Le Cimetière marin,' an initial measure of human fragility and fleetingness in the face of such intensity is conveyed in two celebrated stanzas on the theme of *ubi sunt*. They begin:

Ils ont fondu dans une absence épaisse,  
 L'argile rouge a bu la blanche espèce

and insist above all on the liquefaction of the spuriously stable *realia* of human existence. That deliquescence of consciousness is precisely the focus of three virtuoso stanzas in 'Santorini':

A cinéma-mensonge. Long, flowing fits



Of seeing - whose? Utterly not my own

Then:

the day Grandfather plucked the goose,  
The sore in bloom on a pistachio-eyed  
Tea-shop girl above the riverbank  
- Vignettes as through a jeweler's loupe desried,  
Swifter now, churning down the optic sluice

The warm spate bears me on, helpless

In Valéry, the axis of activity-passivity (or sun and skull), corresponding to that of intensity-deliqescence in Merrill, gave way, we saw, to the Zeno stanzas and ultimately to the strange development going from parasite ('le ver irréfutable') to Achilles' defective stride. Indeed, working between Valéry's French and the subtext of an imaginary English translation, we planted that parasite - with its odd violation of the difference between difference and repetition - on the heel of 'Achille immobile,' wondering what connection might exist between this repressed foot parasite and the repressed tear (LARME) of the sun-sea axis. And it is here that Merrill offers a meditation most uncannily adjusted to Valéry's. In its most succinct formulation, what lies behind the deliquence or radical passivity of consciousness just evoked is 'a ghost-leak in the footsole.' For 'Santorini: Stopping the Leak' is framed and punctuated by a curious physiological narrative. The poem's opening lines, before the trip to the Greek isle begins, relate a medical procedure in the poet's life:

Five sessions of God willing lethal x  
Rays on a live target purple-inked  
For isolation, and the plantar wart  
(Girt by its young, one throbbing multiplex  
Neither knife nor acid could abort)  
Active half my adult life's extinct

The plantar wart, that is, is the volcanic crater *in petto*. And the turning-point of the poem's narrative comes when, in Athens, the poet suddenly discovers that his parasite or 'ingrown guest,' like some return of the repressed, has resurfaced:

In gloom the peevish buzz  
Of a wee winged one-watt presence short-  
Circuiting compulsively the panes  
Gone white. *My* drained self doesn't yet . . . yet does!  
From some remotest galaxy in the veins  
A faint, familiar pulse begins. The wart,

Alive and ticking, that I'd thought destroyed.  
No lasting cure? No foothold on the void?

The wart is like a pure rhythmic principle denying, midst the liquefaction of all things, the very possibility of change. As such it corresponds to the parasite impeding Achilles' stride (or beleaguering his heel) in Valéry. Indeed, the alliterative 'w's of the lines just quoted seem to repeat or compound the alliterative 'v's of such Valéry lines leading to the Zeno stanza as:

Le vrai rongeur, le ver irréfutable

Il vit de vie, il ne me quitte pas

A ce vivant je vis d'appartenir

Until, in the Zeno stanza itself, the violation of the difference between repetition and difference is mediated by the same alliteration:

cette flèche ailée

Qui vibre, vole, et qui ne vole pas!

Small wonder that the Merrill poem will turn shortly to the wonders of 'the Alphabet / Pruned of meaning to dry glottal kernel.'

'Santorini: Stopping the Leak' thus gives us not only the axes of sun-sea and sun-skull (cast in Merrill's case as sun-crater) operative in 'Le Cimetière marin,' but a composite of the very instances - foot, parasite and tear - those two axes served to repress. Indeed, in a recent poem on incipient senility, 'Losing the Marbles,' as if making another stab at the Zeno passage (with its premise of the infinite divisibility of space) in 'Le Cimetière marin,' Merrill writes:

Yet should milk

(As when in Rhetoric one's paragraph

Was passed around and each time cut in half,

From eighty words to forty, twenty, ten,

Before imploding in a puff of Zen)

White out the sense and mutilate the phrase,

My text is Mind no less than Mallarmé's.<sup>20</sup>

The reference to Valéry's master Mallarmé offers some indication of the extent to which Valéry may have 'ghost-written' the concealment of Zeno's name in Zen. At the same time, the very term 'plantar wart,' in its structuring function, is richly allusive. Patience was of the essence in Valéry's 'Palme,' and it was precisely for that reason that the German verb *warten*, to wait, figured prominently in Rilke's (missing) translation of the poem ('Auf Hande der Götter zu warten, / scheint sie das würdigste Ding!'). A palm, moreover, is preeminently a 'plant.' So that

'plantar wart' might well have an unconscious valence in the order of the 'waiting plant' – and the plant emblematic of patient waiting for Merrill (by way of Valéry) is preeminently the palm. In addition, warts are classically imagined as punishment for masturbation. Which brings us back to the configuration prepared by our reading of 'Lost in Translation.' Might it be that the missing feet of that poem return here as the crucially defective foot of 'Santorini'? A positive answer may be inferred from the penultimate strophe where the sun is seen to burn a hole through the poet's film, for that hole, on the one hand, corresponds to the wart (or its repression-removal) and, on the other, to that irreducibly missing piece of the puzzle in 'Lost in Translation,' the composite signifier of both masturbation and its punishment in castration.

'Santorini's' last lines are a retreat – from the dialectic of crater and sun, from the pulsing wart or leak in the 'foot-sole' that incandescent dialectic springs from – to a kind of reassuring normalcy:

Our 'worst' in part lived through, part imminent,  
We made on sore feet, and by then *were* made,  
For a black beach, a tavern in the shade.

Valéry too seems to all but slam his great poem shut on the strangely superficial depths it has elicited by repairing to the beach (and in his case, plunging into the sea):

Non, non! . . . Debout! Dans l'ère successive!  
O puissance salée!  
Courons à l'onde en rejaillir vivant.

This in turn leads in the final stanza to a line so familiar to Merrill:

Le vent se lève! . . . Il faut tenter de vivre!

that he offered up a weary parody of it in 'The Thousand and Second Night':

Try, I suppose, we must, as even Valéry said,  
And said more grandly than I ever shall<sup>21</sup>

'Santorini,' then, ends on precisely the same conventional or normalizing note as 'Le Cimetière marin.' At the same time, the notion of 'vie' (returned to in the 'tavern in the shade') is too rich for Merrill to be contained by any appeal to a reinvigorating normalcy. Specifically, the epic of the Ouija board, *The Changing Light at Sandover*, is in part organized around the conceit of 'V Work,' a name given by Mirabell to the evolutionary-poetical-spiritual labor of charting the reincarnation of

souls into instances of ever greater spirituality.<sup>22</sup> The term itself is etymologized in *Scripts for the Pageant*:

That v in v Work is the Roman *five*  
& 'LIFE' IN OUR SALON TONGUE (GOD A FRENCHMAN?)<sup>23</sup>

'Vie,' that is, the value on which 'Le Cimetière marin' and, by analogy, 'Santorini' end, is perhaps less a source of normalization than of the entire phantasmagoria of reincarnation at the heart of Merrill's major work. But in the alphabetical 'guest list' at the conclusion of the poet's 'Pageant,' the letter v is reserved for Valéry.<sup>24</sup> As though, beyond such more obvious candidates as Yeats, Blake, Hugo, and even Proust, it were he who were assigned a secret tutelary role - as 'ghost-writer' - of substantial sections of Merrill's work: Virgil, perhaps (v for 'Roman *five*' as well) to the poet's gay Dante.

Unless the move beyond the homology between 'Santorini' and 'Le Cimetière marin,' toward *The Changing Light at Sandover*, were a move beyond Valéry himself. To his own predecessor Mallarmé, for example.<sup>25</sup> In 'Don du poème,' following directly a crash of sunlight (figured as a dead bird) through the poet's window at dawn, Mallarmé voices the isolated interjection 'Palmes!'

Palmes! et quand elle a montré cette relique  
A ce père essayant un sourire ennemi,  
La solitude bleue et stérile a frémi.<sup>26</sup>

It had long seemed to me to be, as it were, an almost meaningless - but carefully shaped - piece in the interpretative puzzle of Mallarmé's poem.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, its status as what Merrill, in 'Lost in Translation,' calls a 'freak fragment' was further sustained by my realization that whatever 'Palmes' might mean, the fact that the word occurs in an associative network precisely superimposable on that of the prose text 'Le Démon de l'analogie' (where 'palme' appears as a palm-branch used as a bow on a fantasied string instrument) renders that 'meaning' secondary to the sheer fact of the repetition. More recently, however, I have been struck by a meaning 'Palmes!' cannot but have in 'Don du poème': in the context of the dawn's first light penetrating the poet's chamber, 'palmes' cannot but evoke daybreak fanning its way through the relative darkness of the poet's chamber.

'Palmes' - Mallarmé's interjection in the plural, Valéry's poem in the singular, Merrill's translation and the (missing) focus of a fantasy of masturbation and castration in 'Lost in Translation' - at the inception of the chain no doubt meant 'changing light.'

'All is translation,' Merrill writes. And to his 'every bit of us is lost in it' we may add: every one of us as well.

## NOTES

- 1 James Merrill, *Recitative* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1986), p. 4.
- 2 See Sigmund Freud, 'Screen Memories' (1899), trans. James Strachey, *Early Psychoanalytic Writings* (New York: Collier, 1963), pp. 229-50.
- 3 James Merrill, *From the First Nine* (New York: Atheneum, 1984), pp. 346-52. The poem is skillfully analyzed in the first chapter of Stephen Yenser, *The Consuming Myth: The Work of James Merrill* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 10-30.
- 4 Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator,' *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 78.
- 5 Rilke's translation of Valéry's 'Palme' is included in Rainer Maria Rilke, *Werke: Gedichte und Übertragungen* (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1955), pp. 415-18.
- 6 See Jeffrey Mehlman, '“The Floating Signifier”: From Lévi-Strauss to Lacan,' *French Freud: Structural Studies in Psychoanalysis*, *Yale French Studies*, 48 (1972): 10-37.
- 7 James Merrill, *Divine Comedies* (New York: Atheneum, 1980), pp. 4-10.
- 8 Concerning the use of the Ouija board in *The Changing Light at Sandover*, see James Merrill, 'Interview with J. D. McClatchy,' *Recitative*, pp. 62-83.
- 9 Merrill, *Recitative*, p. 92.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- 11 James Merrill, *Late Settings* (New York: Atheneum, 1985), pp. 72-4. Valéry's poetry is quoted from Paul Valéry, *Oeuvres*, ed. Jean Hytier (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), 2 vols.
- 12 See Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), chap. 2. In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1962), 'auto-erotism' comes to designate the phase whereby the instinct, sacrificing the object of its satisfaction, is brushed back into the fantasy-formation of the drive.
- 13 James Merrill, 'A Room at the Heart of Things,' *The Inner Room* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1988), pp. 18-21. The poem is trenchantly discussed by Helen Vendler in 'In Praise of Perfume,' a review of *The Inner Room* published in *The New Republic*, 3 April 1989, pp. 35-8.
- 14 Merrill, *Late Settings*, pp. 79-86.
- 15 Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator,' *Illuminations*, p. 73.
- 16 See Jeffrey Mehlman, 'On Tear-Work: *L'Ar de Valéry*,' *Yale French Studies*, 52 (1976): 152-73.
- 17 For an account of Valéry's withdrawal from poetry in 1892 and his allegedly unintended return, during the composition of 'La Jeune Parque,' from 1913 to 1917, see *ibid.*, pp. 154-60.
- 18 'Le Vin perdu' deals with the casting of 'tout un peu de vin précieux' into the ocean, 'Les Grenades' with 'les gemmes rouges de jus' of the fruit, and 'L'Abeille' with 'un peu de moi-même vermeille.'
- 19 Paul Valéry, *Cahiers*, ed. Judith Robinson (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), II, p. 455.
- 20 Merrill, 'Losing the Marbles,' *The Inner Room*, p. 87.
- 21 Merrill, *From the First Nine*, p. 126.
- 22 For a discussion of 'v Work,' see Judith Moffett, *James Merrill* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 195-200.
- 23 James Merrill, *The Changing Light at Sandover* (New York: Atheneum, 1982), p. 340.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 547.

- 25 In *Alone With America* (New York: Atheneum, 1980, p. 408), Richard Howard underscores the double inscription of the title phrase 'Fire Screen' in Merrill. On the one hand, 'grid of decorative devices' protecting against the blaze; on the other, 'screen of fire': a flaming curtain. It would be possible to organize in detail much of Mallarmé's poetry around that ambiguity.
- 26 Stéphane Mallarmé, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 40.
- 27 See Jeffrey Mehlman, 'Entre psychanalyse et psychocritique,' *Poétique*, 3 (1971): 365-83.

# MISTRANSLATION, MISSED TRANSLATION: HÉLÈNE CIXOUS' *VIVRE L'ORANGE*

Sharon Willis

Hélène Cixous' *Vivre l'orange*<sup>1</sup> is built upon a fault, a figure it literalizes in the fold of the book: this is a side-by-side English–French translation, and not always a happy one. Translation is guilty of a fault, in many senses. The fault that brings about catastrophic reprisals from God. Babel: the dream of a universal tongue that brings a fall into languages. And a fault as a crack in the surface (*catastrophe*), a rupture in the whole. And, finally, as the faulty logic that mixes categories, counts oranges with apples. As a figure, the orange of the text becomes a sort of universal equivalent, a common denominator in a textual strategy that constantly forces the limit between proper and common, translated and translating, reading and translation. 'In the translation of the apple (into orange), I try to denounce myself / Dans la traduction de la pomme (en orange) j'essaie de me dénoncer' (pp. 40–1). In denouncing herself, this 'I' accuses and betrays herself. Perhaps in another sense of the word, the text announces a broken treaty between French and English? 'Denounce' comes from the Latin for 'messenger.' In this text, the forgotten, the forgetfulness within the word always returns from oblivion to split the meanings produced. In denouncing herself, this 'I' is split into message and messenger. But she also cites herself as guilty, guilty of translation ('I am guilty also of voluntary translation / Je suis coupable aussi de traduction volontaire' [pp. 38–9]).

*Vivre l'orange* is ostensibly a reading of Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector's *La Passion selon G. H.*,<sup>2</sup> but this reading acts as a partial translation. It resides somewhere between the fragmentary citation of critical texts and the limit case of citation that is translation. In order to cite it/read it to you, I must play the role of a simultaneous translator. But *where* is the citing? Which is the translation (since each side of the book's facing pages cites the other, is the site of the other)? We know that Cixous is francophone, but Algerian, so *whose* French is this? The splits that condition the relation between the 'metropolitan' French of France and the *Francophonie* that it considers as 'periphery' form part of the

subtext of Cixous' *The Newly Born Woman*.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, one tendency that marks the 'Sorties' section of that book is its effort to articulate the split position of Algeria as colonial territory - 'Algeria was not France, but it was "French"' (p. 71) - back through the language of the mother/country. A reading of *The Newly Born Woman*'s exploration of the divisions that condition the way Cixous inhabits 'Frenchness,' as language, history, culture, and writing, may even be a necessary pre-text for understanding the politics of writing that *Vivre l'orange* suggests.

But that text offers a kind of split, or 'broken,' English as well. What do we do with this 'bad' translation, with its double attribution 'texte établi par Hélène Cixous depuis la traduction de Ann Liddle et Sarah Cornell'? It has been 'badly,' or at least eccentrically, verified by the author, who was initially renowned as a professor of English literature. Whose English might this be? Moreover, English is placed in the conventionally coded position of the original version in such bilingual editions. In its very structure, then, this book questions the site of the original as unified. Alongside these questions is of course the one of Lispector's language. An Eastern European refugee, she writes in her adopted Portuguese, which Cixous reads in a French translation.<sup>4</sup>

How can I read this text? Is it, in its originary bilingualness, accessible only to the bilingual reader, since one is constantly suspended between the two languages? How can I read it? Where does it address me, in English or in my French? I should start by admitting that one source of fascination is the violence it does to my native tongue, for this is at times a stiff or limping English, full of gaps, blocked by untranslated matter. Just as the speaker of the text is split into author and translator, the position of its *destinataire* is ambivalent. Who is the reader? Possibly the one who inhabits and is inhabited by both languages, at the border between them. In a figurative way, then, the text puts the reader between cultures for a moment.

How does the text appeal to me? It appeals to me precisely at the place of the word 'appeal-appel': 'the tart apple of the being-sweet-on-the-tongues, appelle apple apfel appeal a peal, a-peel/l'âtre apple de l'être-douce-sur-les-langues, appelle, apple, apfel, appel' (pp. 64-5). English gives us the sense of appeal, call, plea, hidden in the French 'appeler,' while the French sense 'to name' exposes the limitations of the English, 'to call.' Peal of a bell, peel of a fruit: l'être-douce-sur-les-langues, rendered here as 'tongue' in English. In their interdependency, their interference, English and French might be said to be bound together in a state of reciprocal appeal, the one turning toward the other to supplement its fault, but each deformed in this very process: missed translation, mistranslation.

That is, the whole text may operate by a strategy that Philip Lewis has called 'abusive' translation, where the abuse has a double function:



on the one hand, that of forcing the linguistic and conceptual system of which it is a dependent, and on the other hand, of directing a critical thrust back toward the text that it translates and in relation to which it becomes a kind of unsettling aftermath (it is as if the translation sought to occupy the original's already unsettled home, and thereby, far from 'domesticating' it, to turn it into a place still more foreign to itself).<sup>5</sup>

Each language abuses the other. The real abuses here, the resistances, are certain elements that remain foreign to both languages, within both texts, like *apfel*. These are transferred all too easily from side to side, but are never translated.

Here the traces of other paths glint through the various oblivions of *Vivre l'orange*. These are the paths *The Newly Born Woman* departs from. One is the detoured path through geography, national borders and cultures, through accidents of language and history that brings Cixous' Jewish family to Algeria. The other is the textual journey of Cixous as a young reader, a journey re-enacted in 'Sorties,' which passes through a series of identifications with figures from the classical 'European' literary tradition. Like the familial journey, this is a trajectory that departs, not in order to return, not to return home, but to continue an approach, to perform its exile, and more important, to establish exile as its own home, and home as a permanent exile.<sup>6</sup>

The orange, which is displaced throughout the text, acts as a stand-in for, or translates to, everything: women, Jews, Iran, Clarice Lispector, writing, the body. As an abusive and confusing effect, an effect of utter commonality, having something in common with each element that it translates, the orange constitutes a block of resistance and heterogeneity, an irreducible impropriety in the text. Like these reciprocally alienated and alienating terms in the text, politics and history stand in an uneasy relation of interference with writing.

The telephone shrieked. . . . We lovers of origins, we're not afraid to return. There is a memory in our forgetfulness. The telephone was crying. It was Renata's anxiety:

'And Iran?'

One thing is not to forget the orange. Another to save oneself in the . . . orange. But it's another thing to not forget Iran.

I went along . . . [i]n the tracks of a woman whose writing is courageous enough to dare to advance in a frightening moment of tearing away from all her being, to the truth of writing it the passion of approaching the origin of beings, at the risk of retreating from history.

Le téléphone poussait des cris. . . . Nous, les amoureuses des

origines, nous n'avons pas peur de revenir. Il y a une mémoire dans notre oubli. Le téléphone pleurait. C'était l'angoisse de Renata:

'Et l'Iran?'

Une chose est de ne pas oublier l'orange. Une autre de se sauver dans l'orange. Mais c'est une autre chose de ne pas oublier l'Iran.

...

Je cheminais . . . [s]ur les traces d'une femme . . . à l'écriture assez courageuse pour oser s'avancer, dans un mouvement effrayant d'arrachement de tout son être, jus'qu'à la vérité de l'écrire . . . la passion d'approcher de l'origine des êtres, au risque de s'éloigner de l'histoire.

(pp. 22-4, 23-5)

History, like politics, here, resides at the border of writing, untranslated, untranslatable. While it is figured as punctual interruption, the telephone's ringing, history prolongs itself across the text, in the name of Iran, the call that is not completed. In its inability to stabilize the relation of two terms, the orange and Iran, or to stabilize either of these terms singly, the text plays out its uneasy relationship to history, its false 'retreat' or exile from it.

To name the orange, 'l'appeler,' is no simple matter. Within the translating process, the orange is subject to all the available modes suggested by the words, 'appel' and 'appeler': a call, a calling to, a calling forth, calling oneself, naming. The text's central question is a divided one: *how* to call, *what* to call? And one of its sources, its point of address, is surely the name of woman: how to call woman.

How to call myself woman? Woman is the specific name of all of the women who have paid so that the oranges of all lands may be unveiled.

Comment m'appeler femme? Femme est le nom propre de toutes les femmes qui ont payé pour que les oranges de tous les pays puissent être dévoilées.

(pp. 38-9)

Indeed, *Vivre l'orange* is explicitly about 'the question of women/la question des femmes' (pp. 34-5):

I asked: '*What have I in common with women?*' From Brazil a voice came to return the lost orange to me. '*The need to go to the sources . . . the need to go further into the birth-voice.*'

J'ai demandé: '*Qu'ai-je de commun avec les femmes?*' Du Brésil une voix est venue me rendre l'orange perdue. '*Le besoin d'aller aux sources . . . le besoin d'entrer plus avant dans la voix natale.*'

(pp. 16-17)

One thinks here of another kind of call. A transatlantic phone call, whose connection proves faulty, subject to interference? The phone calls that interrupt the writing, where history enters the picture through the calls that call you away from writing?

'Woman' appears as a proper name, common name, a proper name in common. The question 'What have *I* in common with women?' becomes the question of woman itself, and of proper and common itself. (Here the ambiguity in the use of the first-person pronoun is willful on my part; since I find myself interpellated to the position of the speaker, the question becomes mine, too.) Questions of commonality, communication (at a distance) here about the problem of context and history. Who are the readers who share a common ground with the text? How does the text communicate its own historical ground, or communicate with that ground? How does its split linguistic context displace the reading? How to call woman in her divided context?

This question of woman, and of what I share with her, receives as a reply an inverted form of its own message, the lost orange. A lost orange is perpetually returned and lost again through the translation. The 'orange perdu' reappears as an orange *read*.

Then she showed me a fruit, which had become foreign to me . . . she read it to me . . . she called it: *naranja*, she translated it into my tongue.

Elle m'a montré un fruit, qui m'était devenu étranger . . . elle me l'a lu . . . elle l'a appelé: *laranja*, elle l'a traduit jusqu'à ma langue.

(pp. 52-3)

Here the translated is transported ~ to a language or a tongue - as both a part of the mouth or speech. Even here the orange is subject to more translation, in words chosen from neither English nor French, and still not the same; the Portuguese 'laranja' is yet deferred in 'naranja.' Reading here becomes a form of translation. *Vivre l'orange* is both a never-ending return from English to French and a double translation of a text read *in* translation (which is itself about translation). But what are the repercussions of the perpetual translation, linguistic repercussion, repetition?

What has reading-translating in common with women? Perhaps this: the relays constructed of translation, transference, operate around the site of the 'I,' the sender; the question of woman, the message sent, maps the trajectory of a *call* that doesn't go through. 'I am foreigne,' says the English text (p. 40). 'Far from the orange, . . . I also write the orange to ask her forgiveness for not being ripe enough for her. I am unforgiveable. I am foreigne' (p. 40). Writing the orange is also writing to it, as well as of it. This hybrid name, a condensation of 'orange' with 'foreigne,' receives

no reply on the French side. A translation is lacking, missed. Source of a troubling unreadability, this gap is situated near one of the most resistant passages of the text, where translation renders the 'I' foreign.

Translation reveals a foreignness in the I; 'I am foreigne' arrives as a belated response to a series of questions, all beginning with 'How to call myself . . .': 'How to call myself woman?' 'How to call myself orange?' (pp. 38, 36).

How to call oneself abroad? far away enough, near enough, strongly enough, tenderly enough - to attract oneself, lead oneself, from oblivion to oblivion, back to the beginnings of foreign memories.

Comment s'appeler à l'étranger? Assez loin, assez près, assez fort, assez tendrement - Pour s'attirer, se conduire, d'oubli en oubli jusqu'aux commencements des mémoires étrangères.

(pp. 36-7)

The source itself seems already to be foreign, an exile - one calls oneself by passing through the foreign. The French gives us: to call oneself abroad, but also, to call oneself in the manner of foreigners. But, then, in English, 'call oneself abroad' is entirely unstable: call oneself when one is abroad, or call oneself to go abroad? The answer to the question of women lies in a foreign source, the foreign name calling us. Before translation, the name is already foreign. Before the name is the space between two oblivions, forgetfulness and forgotten-ness (pp. 22-3).

A book of auto-translation seeks a space *avant toute traduction*, before all translation, a return to an originary moment, a drama of fully inhabiting the mother tongue. But the text finds itself already exiled, finds that the body of the mother tongue is already divided, disfigured. The very anchor of the subject is split, there is 'O' in the 'I.'

There are women who could say how O is surely an element of I, who could have the just courage to demonstrate how the truth of the orange could be called upon to serve the truth of Iran.

Il y a des femmes qui pourraient dire comment O est sûrement un élément d'I, qui auraient le juste courage de démontrer comment la vérité de l'orange peut être appelé à servir la vérité de l'Iran.

(pp. 30-1)

Here the text displays its complex relation to history: the difficulty of communicating between a subject and an event - Iran or the Holocaust. ('Who, if there were an apple of the orange to give us a sign in our disaster, would answer it?'/ 'Qui, s'il y avait une pomme d'orange pour nous faire signe dans notre désastre, lui répondrait?' [pp. 90-1]).

*Vivre l'orange* opens with a telephone call, a call impossible to answer. A text written far from the orange, but à partir de l'orange, denounces its

guilty distance from Iran, seeks to close the gap (takes off from Iran, as from a source). 'Our retreating from the orange will not bring us closer to the iran'/'Ce n'est pas en nous éloignant de l'orange que nous nous rapprocherons de l'iran' (p. 33). The orange is a source of departure and return, a voyage split in an aller-retour; while it constitutes a departure from the historical scene, it is only through such departures, the text seems to insist, that an approach can be made.

Does the question of Iran move me away from the questions that draw near to me like bouquets of thorns, bouquets without roses, full of tears? Or does it bring me nearer, by way of a detour, to questions whose approach I can bear only when veiled?

La question de l'Iran m'éloigne-t-elle des questions qui se rapprochent de moi comme des bouquets d'épines, de bouquets sans roses, plein de larmes? Ou me rapproche-t-elle, par un détour, des questions dont je ne peux supporter l'approche que voilée, voilée?

(pp. 32-4, 33-5)

What have I in common with Iran? Except for a syllable which I realize has the power to lead me back by the ear towards Oran my birth-place?

Qu'ai-je de commun avec l'Iran? sauf une syllabe dont je n'ignore pas qu'elle a le pouvoir de me ramener par l'oreille vers Oran ma ville natale.

(p. 32)

A translation of Iran into orange, the political into the discourse or figure, is effected across Oran, Cixous' birthplace, the ville natale. And similarly, the buried subtext of the history of Cixous' own language, a French learned in a colonial context, is perpetually displaced here in 'Iran'; Algeria is mistranslated as Iran. The text displays a foreign syllable, the O replaces the I. But the 'O' is at the heart of 'I.' And this 'I' remains un-translated, transported to the French page, where it remains literal, as letter. But then the I is a fissure, a fault, in the French text here, itself fissured by the 'O' within it, underneath it. O is also a 'borderline letter' at the edge of sound and word, the oral, the call or appeal, and the body. O is both ground of the I and its fault. The O of origin is also the letter of orange, shaped to the form of the orange, is also the form of appeal, the coded vocative in French and English. O is a sound whose shape the mouth has to take in making it – a dream of pure coincidence, without metaphor, in the name, word, sound, and vocalization. A relay of resemblances. It is this area of coincidence that is buried in the untranslated 'I.'

*Vivre l'orange* is a text that exposes its own fault, faultiness, an internal

rift, across the figure of the orange, a beginning displaced, occupying the place of Iran ('All of the orient is orange'/'Tout l'orient est orange' [pp. 32-3]), of I, of woman, of the body through which the voice passes. This is a particular form of translation: a voyage along the border of interior and exterior, an effort to translate the *pre-nominal* into a name. More approach than arrival, this movement is constantly interrupted by calls: 'An iran telephones me, calls me back to order'/'un iran me téléphone, me rappelle à l'ordre' (pp. 32-3). Embedded here in the repeated image of the calls that do go through is the figure of history as that which never answers you, or answers to you, but which always 'calls you back.'

But, in effect, all of *Vivre l'orange* is a failed journey toward the proper name, beginning with the 'women whom I don't wish to speak of'/'celles dont je n'ai pas envie de parler' (pp. 8-9), in whose place the name Clarice appears later (pp. 62-3), and ending with an *hors-texte* only in French, a passage grafted onto the body of the text: '*Lire femme? Ecoutez: Clarice Lispector. . . . La couleur de son nom en mouvement est évidemment lispectorange.*' Reading woman, translating woman, the text 'arrives' at the splintered common-proper name, the orange, oranjewes, oranjuives. Here the text plays on the possibility of translating between proper and common. This is the utter dispossession of the proper name, detoured, via the translation, through the common. 'Clarice is a rare but common name'/'Clarice est un nom rare, mais commun' (pp. 98-9).

No translation is innocent of deviation, of body, or of history. But the translating movement affects, splits the narrating agency, too:

there was between us only the minute and profound and sufficient apartness where names take place: the elastic space where names pass to alight upon us. I was in I then.

il n'y avait entre nous que l'infime et profond et suffisant écart où ont lieu les noms: l'espace élastique où passent les noms pour se poser sur nous. J'étais en je alors.

(pp. 46-7)

The minute écart (now I am guilty of mixing languages, folding and superimposing the leaves) is the space along the cleavage between the text's two faces, and in the I, at the moment of its positioning. The écart that gives rise to names, to translation as well, is precisely the space of the call:

how foreign and near they are, the things, we don't yet know how to name them, but we call them, all our blood is appeal.

comme elles sont étrangères et si proches, les choses, nous ne savons pas encore les nommer, mais nous les appelons, tout notre sang est appel.

(pp. 68-9)

A calling that is not a naming, but only approach, forces the limit of the name, of communication and destination.

In the translation, there is a simultaneous disruption in address: who is being addressed, called by the name? Whom is the text seeking, to name and to call, by 'des femmes,' for instance? 'I owe a live apple to a woman. . . . To Des Femmes.'/'Je dois une pomme vivante à une femme. . . . A *des femmes*' (pp. 64-5). The proper name of the publisher, the legal mark of the text, is written into the book at a point where it is, in French, subjected to a necessary double reading, wandering between proper and common. In English, it perhaps retains its proper-ness, while remaining estranged from the syntax in which it is embedded, operating in resistance to it. This is a movement which might figure Lispector writing in her exile, and Cixous writing in hers, as a kind of 'alien' native, the 'other' native speaker returning again and again to point out the mother tongue's exile from itself.

For Derrida, this capacity to partake simultaneously of proper and common is what makes the proper name, at a certain point, 'synonyme de confusion' (synonym of confusion). Just as it may veer toward the common, may function as a common name,

il peut dériver l'adresse: l'adresse est toujours livrée à une espèce de chance. Je ne peux pas être assuré qu'un appel, qu'une adresse s'adresse à qui elle s'adresse.

it may detour the address: the address is always at the mercy of a certain kind of chance. I cannot be sure that a call, an address addresses itself to whomever it is addressed to.<sup>8</sup>

Just as the name is fissured, detoured, so is the point of address uncertain, left to chance, wandering. In *Vivre l'orange*, the wandering commonality of the name, 'women,' produces constant reframings of the context, re-situation of the *destinataire*.

'Des femmes,' which might translate - women - constitutes a steadfast, though perpetually displaced, site of resistance in the text: 'What have I in common with women?'/ '*Qu'ai-je de commun avec les femmes?*' (pp. 16-17). From *les* to *des*, definite to indefinite, English resists the difference here. This unanswered question - 'the question of women'/'la question des femmes' (pp. 34-5) - deviates from any locus of enunciation or address, since the term that would anchor it, 'woman,' is precisely the point of perpetual translation: women to Iran, to oranges, to Jews, to oranjewes. What do all these terms have in common? What is the status of commonality? Is it possible? Is it avoidable?

This question undergoes repeated translation, takes upon itself the form of translation, as in the following passage where it becomes a site

both translated and translating - a non-site inhabited by so many languages that it is anchored in none. These are the 'questions I can bear only when veiled':

The question of the Jews. The question of women. The question of Jewoman. *A questão das laranjudias. Della arancebrea.*

Am I enjewing myself? Or woe I a woman? Win I a woman, or wont I jew-ich? Joy I donna? Gioia jew? Or gioi an femme? Fruo?

La question des juifs. La question des femmes. La question des juifemmes. *La questione delle donnarance. A questao das laranjas.*  
The question:

Juis-je juive ou fuis-je femme? Jouis-je judia ou suis-je mulher? Joy I donna? ou fruo en filha? Fuis-je femme ou est-ce que je me ré-juive?

(pp. 34-5)

How could one translate this passage, into what language? How would one render the foreign elements? Here the text seems to be at work on relations of foreignness. French, English, German, Italian, Portuguese; interfering terms repeat the same unnameable question, veiled in mutual translations and deformations. In this radical heterogeneity, the reader must become 'foreign.' Where is this question addressed, since no one may read it in her mother tongue? This is a question that cannot exist outside the space of mutual dependency and interference. Perhaps it is like the two wandering terms here, Jews and women, whose commonality is fragmented through linguistic communities, unnameable in any language alone, over-named, mis-named, estranged from the mother tongue their name deforms.

This passage, and indeed, it constitutes a passage, from language to language, side to side of the text, is a gesture of de-nomination, with the stress on the *de-*, unnamings. This is a textual performance of the impossibility of calling by the name Woman, of getting a call through, of receiving a call, of anything but approach.

Elsewhere, Cixous speaks of 'writing in the feminine' and its connection to an archaic space, as a particular version of mourning.

Writing in the feminine is passing on what is cut out by the Symbolic, the voice of the mother, passing on what is most archaic. The most archaic force that touches a body is one that enters by the ear and reaches the most intimate point. . . . I see it as an outpouring . . . as vomiting, as 'throwing up.' . . . And I'd link this with a basic structure of property relations defined by mourning. Man cannot live without resigning himself to loss. He has to mourn. It's his way



of withstanding castration. . . . So you 'mourn,' you make haste to recover the investment made in the lost object. But I believe women *do not mourn* . . . Woman . . . does not resign herself to loss. . . . This makes her writing a body that overflows, disgorges, vomiting as opposed to masculine incorporation . . . she writes of not-writing, not happening. . . . She crosses limits: she is neither outside nor in, whereas the masculine would try to 'bring the outside in if possible.'<sup>9</sup>

Where Cixous uses the term 'incorporation' to define mourning work's purpose, a mere displacement toward the metaphoric gives the structure of introjection, which is the movement by which the subject resigns itself to loss by incorporating the lost object, making it a part of itself, and, thereby, idealizing it. Cixous' version of mourning – non-mourning, not withholding loss – is elaborated in a different economy of incorporation. Her doubled text plays with the boundary, the border, taking in the foreign elements, without translation – so that they are never fully incorporated, brought inside, but rather remain the markers of an internal foreign body, a loss within. At the same time, however, the loss transforms the interior, the very notion of 'within.' Loss within, a foreign element within, analog of that alien internal entity – sexuality. In this passage, that foreign body is related to the mother tongue, impossible to inhabit. Language and desire are incorporated along with food at the mother's breast. The body itself, as gendered body, is installed at its border, where the word fills the mouth calling for food.

'Writing in the feminine' may be one proper name for *Vivre l'orange's* textual operations. This is not feminine writing, but writing *in* the feminine, as in a key (tonal), in the feminine as in a medium, like ink, or as in a language, in French or in English, or as within. The notion 'within' is already faulted, faulty. Here the feminine seems to be, not a language, not a name, but rather, translation. And indeed, mis-translation, missed translation,<sup>10</sup> a movement from tongue to tongue, marks on the body of the mother tongue – a relay of appeals that never arrive at a destination/address.

Just as French and English must constantly appeal to each other across the text's internal order, so the body and language here are placed in a state of reciprocal appeal, not unlike the reciprocal appeal of history and discourse. The split textual body *calls* the feminine. And the feminine is none other than the perpetual translation effect – body to language – body and language always missing each other. There would be no essential originary feminine, no final appeal, but rather a feminine constructed at the point of language – at the point of the speaking subject's insertion in the social field, a discursive network of relations, collective representations that rest on the body, on sexual difference. Language always appeals to the body upon which it is propped, just as the body only comes

to pose itself, and always as gendered, in and through language - to which it appeals. But each is always the alien body within the other.

*Vivre l'orange* incorporates the orange without consuming it, without translating it, just as its approach to the question of Iran never establishes a reply. Through its faulty connections - its telecommunication, communication at a distance - the text performs the failure of a discursive approach to history, the perpetual non-coincidence and interdependence of discourse and history. That is, discourse cannot speak history, but neither can it escape history. So writing fails to answer to or for history, misses it, as it misses the body. But history always calls it back, reminds it of its exile. In the detours of this text, the tormented paths of its syntax, the resistances it throws up, the writing shows itself to be haunted, haunted by its own past perhaps, a past rooted in a French permanently displaced from France. It is this language, which I can read only as a buried and displaced subtext, partially translated into a reading of Lispector, momentarily recalled in the name of Iran, that returns to haunt the French written in France, the language of French literary and philosophical tradition, in the form of a foreign woman's text.

## NOTES

- 1 Hélène Cixous, *Vivre l'orange* (Paris: des femmes, 1979).
- 2 Clarice Lispector, *La Passion selon G. H.*, trans. Clelia Pisa (Paris: des femmes, 1978).
- 3 Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).
- 4 Verena Andermatt Conley takes up this question in her introduction to *Reading With Clarice Lispector* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), her edition and translation of Cixous' collected seminars on Lispector, 1980-5. 'Cixous works through the difference of French and Portuguese, and in turn encounters what her own readers face when they follow her novels,' writes Conley.

Lispector's voice informs Cixous. It comes to her by way of Brazil, in bilingual editions or in French translation. In fact, the work raises questions about the status of readings from texts in translation, not unlike the problem of readers of Cixous who face a poetic writing inspired at once by Hegelian philosophy and James Joyce. Phonic and graphic effects, so important for the ideological status of the text, are sometimes changed or even lost in translation.

(p. viii)

By contrast, these sorts of effects, one might argue, are not so much lost in *Vivre l'orange*, as they are wandering, errant.

- 5 Philip E. Lewis, 'The Measure of Translation Effects,' in *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 43.
- 6 Specifically, see Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 70:

I come, biographically, from a rebellion, from a violent and anguished

direct refusal to accept what is happening on the stage on whose edge I find I am placed, as a result of the combined accidents of History. I had this strange 'luck': a couple of rolls of the dice, a meeting between two trajectories of the diaspora, and, at the end of these routes of expulsion and dispersion that mark the functioning of western History through the displacements of Jews - I fall. . . . Today I know from experience that one cannot imagine what an Algerian French girl was; you have to have been it.

Cixous continues here to trace the paths of exile in her own 'identity,' in such a way as to suggest that the homogenized literary and cultural history presented as official national identity in much of Europe is really the history of exclusion, expulsion, and finally, narrative repression of Jewish and North African participation in them.

I am (not) Arab. Who am I? I am 'doing' French history. I am a Jewish woman. . . . Who is this 'I'? Where is my place? I am looking. I search everywhere. I read, I ask. I begin to speak. Which language is mine? French? German? Arabic?

(p. 71)

These questions return to haunt *Vivre l'orange*, but in ways that are, I think, considerably displaced.

- 7 Without seeking at all to merely enhance this argument with a 'postcolonial' allure, I cannot help but be struck by a recent argument that Homi Bhabha has made concerning the appearance of a Hindi letter in a poem written 'in English,' Adil Jussawalla's 'Missing Person,' an argument which concerns the untranslated letter, and its impact as a mark upon the English context. Not only does such a letter signal the hybrid postcolonial context, the poem's situation in a context produced of competing languages, but it exposes the hybrid quality of the colonizing culture.

Now we can begin to see why the threat of the (mis)translation . . . among those displaced and diasporic peoples who picked through the refuse, is a constant reminder to the postimperial West, of the hybridity of its mother tongue, and the heterogeneity of national space.

(Homi Bhabha, 'Interrogating Identity: The Postcolonial Prerogative,' *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. David Theo Goldberg [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990], p. 203). I am struck by the coincidence primarily because I think that the kind of work Cixous' text, *Vivre l'orange*, does upon the French language, related as it is to detours through a hybrid space constructed of linguistic interferences, must be seen in relation to her Algerian past, a past which returns through the figure of Iran, even as it is displaced and disguised in the curious transactions between French and English, or French and Portuguese, throughout.

- 8 Jacques Derrida, *L'Oreille de l'autre: otobiographies, transferts, traductions*, ed. Claude Lévesque and Christie V. McDonald (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 1982), p. 143, my translation.
- 9 Hélène Cixous, 'Castration or Decapitation?' trans. Annette Kuhn, *Signs*, 7 (1981): 41-55 (54).
- 10 This notion of *missed* translation, of *missing*, returns with an almost obsessive force to condition Cixous' readings of Lispector's *œuvre* as 'feminine writing' in her later seminars. Speaking of the lovers Martim and Vitória in *The Apple in the Dark*, Cixous relates loving to missing:

## MISTRANSLATION, MISSED TRANSLATION

Martim and Vitória miss each other, in the way that I said 'love each other.' They try to reach each other with the same intensity with which they try to avoid each other. They constantly succeed in missing each other. . . . They constantly miss each other, which means they never miss each other. The story has to lead to a separation that is marked from the beginning. *The Apple in the Dark* is a possibility, a moment, a version of *The Passion According to G. H.* Martim and Vitória stay in the space of what can be called the nonpossible.

(*Reading With Lispector*, p. 67)

And love, in this context, is mis-understanding:

The supreme statement of love would be: I do not understand you. I do not want to understand you. I love from not understanding you. And love is the explosive, painful tension between not understanding and wanting to understand, between trembling at the very idea of understanding while passionately wanting to be understood and fearing above all any type of comprehension.

(p. 66)

# TRANSLATION AND THE POSTCOLONIAL EXPERIENCE: THE FRANCOPHONE NORTH AFRICAN TEXT

*Samia Mehrez*

In an introductory, autobiographical section to one of his chapters in *After Babel* George Steiner describes himself in the following terms:

I have no recollection whatever of a first language. So far as I am aware, I possess equal currency in English, French, and German. . . . At home, conversations were interlinguistic not only inside the same sentence or speech segment, but as between speakers. . . . Even these three 'mother tongues' were only a part of the linguistic spectrum in my early life. Strong particles of Czech and Austrian Yiddish continued active in my father's idiom. And beyond these, like a familiar echo of voice just out of hearing, lay Hebrew. This polyglot matrix was far more than a hazard of private condition. It organized, it imprinted on my grasp of personal identity, the formidably complex, resourceful cast of feeling of Central European and Judaic humanism.<sup>1</sup>

Compare Steiner's rendition of his plurilingual experience to that of the Moroccan sociologist, novelist and poet Abdelkebir Khatibi in his autobiographical text *La Mémoire tatouée*:

A l'école, un enseignement laïc, imposé à ma religion: je devins triglotte, lisant le français sans le parler, jouant avec quelques bribes de l'arabe écrit, et parlant le dialecte comme quotidien. Où, dans ce chassé-croisé, la cohérence et la continuité?

At school, with a secular education imposed on my religion, I became a triglot: I read French without being able to speak it, I played with some fragments of written Arabic, and I spoke the dialect as my everyday language. Where in the midst of this confusion is coherence and continuity?<sup>2</sup>

At first glance, the experiences of these two plurilingual subjects might appear parallel. However, a closer look at the position from which each subject makes his statements will prove that their plurilinguism is

produced under a set of significantly different historical circumstances. Whereas Steiner grounds his experience in a Judaio-Christian, European humanistic tradition, Khatibi locates his own within the colonial context. If Steiner has no recollection of a 'first language,' Khatibi quite obviously hierarchizes the language layering in his childhood: the Moroccan dialect spoken at home, classical Arabic barely mastered at the Koranic schools for Muslim children, and the 'imposed' French language of the colonizer learned at the French *lycée*. Steiner's 'mother tongues' operate on a level of equality, they happen almost simultaneously, but Khatibi's linguistic capacities remain unequal, discontinuous and decidedly shaped by a gradual process of acculturation to the dominant, namely the French language and culture.

What is absent from Steiner's autobiographical note, an absence which circumscribes the ideological limits of his project and indeed his entire monumental work on translation, is precisely the political context and power relations within which language acquisition takes place. Having located his own personal experience within the confines of humanism, Steiner is bound to exclude, in his otherwise classic work on translation theory, questions of colonialism and cultural hegemony which many Third World postcolonial plurilingual writers, writing in the language of the ex-colonizer, must confront.

Indeed, the emergence and continuing growth on the world literary scene of postcolonial anglophone and francophone literatures from the ex-colonies as well as the increasing ethnic minorities in the First World metropolises are bound to challenge and redefine many accepted notions in translation theory which continue to be debated and elaborated within the longstanding traditions of western 'humanism' and 'universalism.' These postcolonial texts, frequently referred to as 'hybrid' or 'métissés' because of the culturo-linguistic layering which exists within them, have succeeded in forging a new language that defies the very notion of a 'foreign' text that can be readily translatable into another language. With this literature we can no longer merely concern ourselves with conventional notions of linguistic equivalence, or ideas of loss and gain which have long been a consideration in translation theory. For these texts written by postcolonial bilingual subjects create a language 'in between' and therefore come to occupy a space 'in between.' In most cases, the challenge of such space 'in between' has been double: these texts seek to decolonize themselves from two oppressors at once, namely the western ex-colonizer who naively boasts of their existence and ultimately recuperates them and the 'traditional,' 'national' cultures which shortsightedly deny their importance and consequently marginalize them.

Hence, in using the language of the ex-colonizer it was important for postcolonial bilingual writers to go beyond a passive form of contestation, where the postcolonial text remained prisoner of western literary

models and standards, restrained by the dominant form and language. It was crucial for the postcolonial text to challenge both its own indigenous, conventional models as well as the dominant structures and institutions of the colonizer in a newly forged language that would accomplish this double movement. Indeed, the ultimate goal of such literature was to subvert hierarchies by bringing together the 'dominant' and the 'underdeveloped,' by exploding and confounding different symbolic worlds and separate systems of signification in order to create a mutual interdependence and intersignification.

Not that I am referring to a process whereby the language of the Other becomes unrecognizable, or deformed. Rather, the process is one where the language of the Other comes to encode messages which are not readily decoded by the monolingual reader whose referential world continues to exclude, ignore, and deny the existence of other referential worlds that are crucial to a more 'global' rather than 'colonialist,' 'imperialist' reading of the text. By drawing on more than one culture, more than one language, more than one world experience, within the confines of the same text, postcolonial anglophone and francophone literature very often defies our notions of an 'original' work and its translation. Hence, in many ways these postcolonial plurilingual texts in their own right resist and ultimately exclude the monolingual and demand of their readers to be like themselves: 'in between,' at once capable of reading and translating, where translation becomes an integral part of the reading experience. In effect, this literary production is in and of itself plurilingual and in many instances places us, as Khatibi has suggested, at the 'threshold of the untranslatable.'<sup>3</sup>

This essay will focus on examples from francophone North African literature as one instance of postcolonial texts which place us at this 'threshold of the untranslatable,' where the reading experience itself can be no other but a perpetual translation. I am not constructing an argument *against* the translation of these texts into other languages; many of them already exist in other languages and are read in translation. Rather, mine is an argument *for* reading a text, in fact, *for* reading the world, during what we continue to refer to, quite unjustifiably, as the postcolonial period.

Contrary to the assimilationist role assigned to the North African intellectual elite by their French colonizers, and in keeping with many other examples of colonial situations, *les évolués* (those North Africans who have evolved, that is, the acculturated bilingual colonial subjects) became the vanguard of the resistance to, and contestation of, French politico-cultural domination - despite the initial unease, ambivalence, even guilt about their own status as postcolonial subjects. In all three North African nation states (Tunisia, 1956; Morocco, 1956; Algeria, 1962)

the decolonization process, both in its political and intellectual sense, was and still is conditioned and shaped, to a great extent, by the writings (in the French language) of such *évolués*.

It is true that literary production in Arabic has increased since independence, and that some writers, like the late Kateb Yacine and Rachid Boudjedra, have abandoned French for Arabic. Nevertheless, it is equally true that many other writers continue to produce works in French, and in 'the metropole.' Rather than entertain the thought of belonging totally to the French literary tradition, these writers have assumed their bilingualism as an effective means with which to contest all forms of domination, and all kinds of exclusion within their own 'native' cultures and their 'host' cultures as well. Despite the heated debates on nationalism and national literatures, these postcolonial bilingual writers chose the word over silence. For as the Moroccan literary critic Abdelfatah Kilito aptly put it:

Le complexe du mutisme vaut celui de la castration. . . . Ce n'est pas un malheur irréparable de perdre *sa* langue, mais le malheur suprême consiste à perdre *la* langue, le morceau de chair qui se loge dans la bouche.

The complex of muteness is no better than that of castration. . . . It is not an irremediable misfortune to lose *one's* tongue [that is, language]; the ultimate misfortune is to lose *the* tongue, that piece of flesh that sits inside one's mouth.<sup>4</sup>

As this passage indicates, the language of the Other can serve a double purpose: it may be the arena for confrontation, for resistance to the Other, but it may also be a means of self-liberation. Hence, the choice of French as a language of expression, as the Tunisian writer Abdelwahab Meddeb insists, is never a naive or simple one. Meddeb's case is particularly interesting since his is indeed a deliberate choice. Unlike many of his more senior francophone North African writers, Meddeb, whose father and grandfather were professors of theology at the prestigious mosque-university of Zitouna in Tunis, has perfect command of classical Arabic and has published extensively on some of the greatest mystics in Islam: Hallaj, Suhrawardi, Bistami and Ibn Arabi.<sup>5</sup> His novels, as the titles themselves clearly demonstrate (*Talismano* [1979] and *Phantasia* [1986]), together with his poetry (*Tombeau d'Ibn Arabi* [1986]), are certainly brilliant examples of the plurilingual text and of how Arabic and French continuously rework and rewrite each other. Meddeb himself is obviously very conscious of this process, and for a very specific reason, which my argument for the reader/translator in this essay paraphrases:

L'écriture française nous 'livre' à l'autre, mais on se défendra par l'arabesque, la subversion, le dédale, le labyrinthe, le décentrage



incessant de la phrase et du langage, de manière que l'autre se perde comme dans les ruelles de la *casbah*.

Writing in French 'surrenders' us to the other, but we will defend ourselves with the arabesque, the subversion, the maze, the labyrinth, the incessant decentering of the sentence and of language so that the other will get lost just as in the narrow streets of the *casbah*.<sup>6</sup>

The metaphor suggested by Meddeb in this passage – to cause native speakers of French to lose their way in their own language just as they would lose their way in the meandering alleys of the *casbah*, that is, the old North African *medinas* or cities – is a most appropriate figurative rendition of the new demands of postcolonial bilingualism. Meddeb's use of the *casbah* as the other pole of the metaphor has the function of superimposing an unfamiliar model text (in this case, Arabic culture) which needs to be decoded if the entire francophone text is to be readable. As such the francophone text becomes a double text, a bilingual text, and demands of its readers (who are themselves expected to be bilingual) to approach it as such:

J'écris en français mais je me situe dans la culture arabe classique . . . Cette restauration des traces n'aurait qu'un enjeu: faire advenir la culture arabe à l'universalité, en tant que l'une des traditions qui l'ont effectivement informée.

I write in French but I situate myself in classical Arab culture . . . This restoration of traces has but one goal: to situate Arab culture at the level of universality, as one of the traditions that effectively inform it.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike Meddeb, the Algerian writer Assia Djebar has had no choice in using the French language. We know that after her return from France to Algeria in 1962, at the end of the war of liberation, she spent approximately twelve years of 'silence' on the literary front during which she realized that the conversion from writing in French to writing in Arabic could not be achieved. Her experimentation with film, as an alternative medium, and her eventual return to the French language culminated in her finest literary output to date, namely *L'Amour, la fantasia*, the first volume of her Arabian Quartet, published in 1985.

The narrative in *L'Amour, la fantasia* oscillates between the author's own personal history and that of the Algerian people, focusing on women from the distant colonial past and women from the more recent Algerian war of independence. In the first half of the narrative, Djebar rereads and rewrites the letters and memoirs (originally written mainly in French) of the colonial officers and other witnesses of the first encounter in 1830 between the French armada and the 'unconquerable city' of

Algiers, what will become, in her own words, an 'obscene copulation.' The second half of the narrative is orchestrated around the first-person voices of the women of Algeria who participated, each in her own way, in the Algerian war of independence. The voice that punctuates the entire narrative is that of the implied author who intercepts its movements in order to inscribe her own autobiography.

In *L'Amour, la fantasia* Djebbar is particularly conscious of the politics of her use of the French language. Throughout the text, she problematizes her relationship to the language of her ex-colonizer. As she transcribes, in French ('the language of the enemy'), parts of the letters and eyewitness reports of the French soldiers and officers, she accedes, as an Arab woman, to a position of power which History had denied her:

Parmi la première escadre qui glisse insensiblement vers l'Ouest, Amable Matterer regarde la ville qui regarde. Le jour même, il décrit cette confrontation, dans la plate sobriété du compte rendu. A mon tour, j'écris dans sa langue, mais plus de cent cinquante ans après.

Amable Matterer is at his post in the first squadron which glides slowly westward; he gazes at the city which returns his gaze. The same day he writes of the confrontation, dispassionately, objectively. I, in my turn, write, using his language, but more than one hundred and fifty years later.<sup>8</sup>

What Djebbar effectively does in this passage, and throughout the narrative, is to create a new confrontation: the French gaze on Algeria against her own gaze on the French words 'lodged in volumes now gathering dust on library shelves' which 'present the warp and woof of a "monstrous" reality, that is made manifest in all its unambiguous detail.'<sup>9</sup> She writes in the French language which 'was formerly used to entomb [her] people'<sup>10</sup> 150 years later to expose it. This confrontation between her gaze and that of the colonial officers, her use of the French language and theirs, generates the most crucial tension in the text. Furthermore, just as Djebbar rereads the French eyewitness reports, she transcribes/ translates the oral testimonies of Algerian woman on the war of liberation (1956-62) which she had recorded in the spoken Arabic dialect. As Djebbar reinscribes these testimonies in her narrative, she 'arabizes' the French in which they are recorded.

The ambiguity remains, however, that the voice given to these women is in French. This fact in itself is at once liberating and compromising. Already, by giving Algerian women a voice at all, Djebbar challenges and violates the dictates of the patriarchal system which made of her an exception, as a bilingual subject: 'a little Arab girl' who wrote in the

'language of the Others'; the 'gift' bestowed upon her by her father, an instructor in the colonial primary schools of Algeria. Djébar asks herself the rhetorical question (in French), 'How could a woman speak aloud, even in Arabic, unless on the threshold of extreme age?'<sup>11</sup> Djébar hence challenges these structures that impose silence on women by writing her text, by usurping the *qalam* (pen) normally reserved for the patriarch and placing it in the hand of the mutilated Algerian woman:

Il [Fromentin] évoque alors un détail sinistre: au sortir de l'oasis que le massacre, six mois après, empuantit, Fromentin ramasse, dans la poussière, une main coupée d'Algérienne anonyme. Il la jette ensuite sur son chemin. Plus tard, je me saisis ce cette main vivante, main de la mutilation et du souvenir et je tente de lui faire porter le *qalam*.

He [Fromentin] describes one sinister detail: as he is leaving the oasis which, six months after the massacre, is still filled with stench, Fromentin picks up out of the dust the severed hand of an anonymous Algerian woman. He throws it down again in his path. Later, I seize on this living hand of mutilation and of memory, and I attempt to bring it the *qalam*.<sup>12</sup>

The *qalam* (pen), transcribed from the Arabic in the French passage and placed by Djébar in the hand of the mutilated Algerian woman, is absolutely crucial to our reading/translation of her narrative. In orthodox Islam, Djébar's gesture comes close to a blasphemous position. Only the bilingual reader will immediately recognize the untranslatable word *qalam* as one of the key words in the first revelation of the Koran where writing is defined as a divine attribute. It is *Allah* himself who teaches with the pen (*'allama bi-l-qalam*) knowledge that is then handed down to the patriarch. By usurping this attribute and knowledge for women, Djébar commits a transgression for which she (symbolically) risks complete exclusion from her ancestry. In taking this risk, however, Djébar paradoxically imposes her ancestors' world as one that must be decoded by the reader.

Nonetheless, when the transgression (i.e., writing with the *qalam*) is made, it can only be made in the father's 'gift,' the French language. Ironically, it is the language of 'the enemy' that allows Djébar to liberate the stifled voices of the women of Algeria both from the colonial past and from the national present. Her father's 'gift' is also what liberates her, as one of the voices in her narrative. As an adolescent, she writes her first love-letter in French and later, as a woman writer, she voices the 'cry uttered on deflowering,' 'a cry which might ring out at every wedding,' 'long, infinite first cry of the body,'<sup>13</sup> in the language of the ex-colonizer. In writing these cries, Djébar reinvents the French language: '*L'Amour, ces cris (s'écrit)*: my hand as I write in French makes the pun on love

affairs that are aired.'<sup>14</sup> But this 'airing' in Djébar's reinvented French language also means exclusion from her ancestry, that ancestry she has tried to 'represent':

Parler de soi-même hors de la langue des aïeules, c'est se dévoiler certes, mais pas seulement pour sortir de l'enfance, pour s'en exiler définitivement.

Speaking of oneself in a language other than that of the elders is indeed to unveil oneself, not only to emerge from childhood but to leave it, never to return.<sup>15</sup>

Djébar's knowledge of her inevitable exclusion is coupled with an equally unavoidable feeling of guilt: to write in the Other's language is to surrender Algeria yet again, 150 years later, to the same colonizer:

Or cette mise à nu, déployée dans la langue de l'ancien conquérant, lui qui, plus d'un siècle durant, a pu s'emparer de tout, sauf précisément des corps féminins, cette mise à nu renvoie étrangement à la mise à sac du siècle précédent.

But this stripping naked, when expressed in the language of the former conqueror (who for more than a century could lay his hands on everything save women's bodies), this stripping naked takes us back oddly enough to the plundering of the preceding century.<sup>16</sup>

*L'Amour, la fantasia* is a text which anchors itself in a highly deliberate and problematized confrontation with the languages and cultures which are its *raison d'être*: the acquisition and use of the French language (the gift of the father which leads to exclusion and freedom) and the loss of and nostalgia for the Arabic language (the mother tongue which insures inclusion and silence). Any translation of this text into yet another language is bound to dissolve and mask these crucial confrontations. For Djébar undertakes to translate her own text as she moves between the written French (*l'écrit*) of the colonizers, the oral 'arabized' French of the Algerian women, the cries of love (*les cris*) and those of the *fantasia* (cavalcade) of the Algerian tribes. As Djébar transcribes and translates, she creates a text that is at once a resister and liberator whose existence in French is undoubtedly the prime reason for its power and importance.

The model of the francophone North African text that is both resister and liberator is equally valid for the work of Tahar Ben Jelloun, the Moroccan essayist, poet, novelist who also writes for the French daily *Le Monde*. In November 1987, Ben Jelloun was awarded the Prix Goncourt, the most prestigious literary award in France, for his novel *La Nuit sacrée*, written as a sequel to *L'Enfant de sable*, in which he deals critically with issues of gender and sexuality as they are socially

constructed within traditional Islamic societies. Through the voice, style, and idiom of a traditional Arab storyteller and several other narrators, Ben Jelloun creates in *L'Enfant de sable* a legend in the French language. He consecutively tells, negates, and retells the story of Ahmad-Zahra, the little girl (Zahra) who, as the eighth daughter of her wealthy Moroccan father, is brought up as a boy (Ahmad) in order to maintain the patriarchal system in Islam and secure a male heir for the family's fortune. In the sequel novel *La Nuit sacrée*, Ahmad-Zahra takes over the narrative in order to tell her own story. At the age of 21, her dying father sets her free from her imposed manhood, and she begins the fantastic rediscovery of her own sexuality, her desires and her womanhood.

Since its publication, *La Nuit sacrée* has become one of the record-breaking sellers in the entire history of the Goncourt. Its enormous success has elicited several interesting repercussions. When President François Mitterrand was asked about his reaction to Ben Jelloun's award, he remarked that the event was a 'homage to the universality of the French language'!<sup>17</sup> Very quickly, the geocultural space in the major bookstores in France was shuffled: all francophone North African literature remained safely lined up on three remote shelves, while Ben Jelloun's work alone was conspicuously exhibited, front view, in the 'littérature française' section!

The irony remains, however, that *La Nuit sacrée* gains its full significance in its Arabic translation. Both the title and the very style and idiom of this novel can only be decoded within their Arabo-Islamic context. The Arabic 'translation' of the title is *Laylatu l-qadr*. This Arabic title is not a literal translation of the French words which remain alien to the cultural referent provided by the Arabic sign. The bilingual reader, however, is bound to make these necessary translations as soon as he or she begins to read the French text. If anything, therefore, the French title (of the original) fails to translate the Arabic subtext in which the entire work is grounded. The words *Laylatu l-qadr* (literally, 'the night of the decree') can only signify, in any Muslim's mind, the night on which, according to Sura 97, the Koran was revealed to the prophet Mohamed between the 26th and 27th days of the month of Ramadan. Hence, this sign evokes and connotes a whole range of Islamic cultural referents which the French language, as a system of signification, is unable to translate. Consequently, the French title is decentered and deterritorialized by the Arabic sign which the bilingual reader is expected to read/translate into the French text.

In Islamic culture, *Laylatu l-qadr* has connotations for both orthodox and popular Islam. On the one hand, the Koran informs us, and Ben Jelloun translates the verse into French within the novel: *Laylatu l-qadri khayrun min alfi shahr* ('The night of the decree is better than a thousand months'). Popular culture, on the other hand, which

permeates Ben Jelloun's text, tells us that during this 'sacred night' the seven heavens are open, and that Allah will grant all our wishes no matter how improbable they might be. It is on the night (*laylatu l-qadr*) that the young protagonist of *La Nuit sacrée* is set free by her father and, in a narrative that begins at the end, becomes the teller of her own story. Surrounded by a circle of attentive listeners, one among many of the famous circles of traditional storytellers in the city of Marrakesh, Ahmad-Zahra begins to tell a different version of her story. She contradicts the other versions in Ben Jelloun's earlier novel, *L'Enfant de sable*, and yet continues to conform to the idiom and formulas of the Arabic oral tradition of storytelling:

Ceux qui se sont risqués à raconter la vie de cet enfant de sable et de vent ont eu quelques ennuis: certains ont été frappés d'amnésie; d'autres ont failli perdre leur âme. On vous a raconté des histoires. Elles ne sont pas vraiment les miennes. . . . Mais comme ma vie n'est pas une conte, j'ai tenu à rétablir les faits et à vous livrer le secret gardé sous une pierre noire dans une maison aux murs hauts au fond d'une ruelle fermée par sept portes.

Those who have ventured to recount the story of the life of the child of sand and wind have had some problems: some were stricken with amnesia; others have come close to losing their soul. They have told you stories. They are not really mine. . . . But since my life is not a story, I insisted that I establish the facts and give you the secret kept under a black stone inside a house with high walls at the end of an alleyway enclosed by seven gates.<sup>18</sup>

As in *L'Enfant de sable*, the readers find themselves confronting a text that injects the French with the language of an Other, namely that of an Arabic oral tradition of storytelling that still exists, not just in Morocco, but all over the Arab world. The passage quoted above reads like a 'translation' from one of Shehrazade's stories to King Shehryar, to mention but one of the possible and familiar model texts which underlie and inform its language. Chains of stories, which are similar, different, parallel and opposite, orally told and retold in various forms. Strings of details: a 'black stone,' placed 'under a house with high walls at the end of an alleyway enclosed by seven gates.' Not only is this orality transcribed by Ben Jelloun into writing, but it is transcribed into written French. As the text proceeds to transcribe into French the Arabic orality and formulaic idioms that inform it, *La Nuit sacrée* becomes itself its own translation. What may have been constraining for the francophone writer in using the language of the colonizer, imposed upon his or her Arabo-Islamic culture, becomes an opportunity for experimentation and ultimately subversion. The French language of the 'original' text of *La*

*Nuit sacrée* is nourished with the old Arab traditions and ironically, in the process, it is the Arabic subtext that dominates the French language and ultimately 'underdevelops' it.<sup>19</sup>

Paradoxically, this process of subverting the dominant language can be considerably liberating for the francophone writer. In *La Nuit sacrée*, there is a long description of Ahmad-Zahra's first sexual encounter. The passage is a satirical commentary on how women's bodies are violated constantly in traditional Islamic societies with the blessings of *Allah* upon whom the male calls for help and to whom he prays during and after the 'rape':

- Au nom de Dieu le Clément et le Miséricordieux, que le salut et la bénédiction soient sur le dernier des prophètes, notre maître Mohammed, sur sa famille et ses compagnons. Au nom de Dieu le Très-Haut. Louanges à Dieu qui a fait que le plaisir immense pour l'homme réside en l'intériorité chaude de la femme. Louanges à Dieu qui a mis sur mon chemin ce corps nubile qui avance sur la pointe extrême de mon désir. C'est le signe de sa bénédiction, de sa bonté et de sa miséricorde.

- In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. May blessings and benediction be bestowed upon the last of the prophets, our lord Mohamed, his family and his companions. In the name of God, the Greatest. Praise be to God who has caused the immense pleasure for man to reside within the warm inside of woman. Praise be to God who has placed, upon my path, this nubile body at the extreme of my desire. This is the sign of His benediction, of His goodness and His mercy.<sup>20</sup>

The passage begins with the conventional Islamic *Basmala* (the invocation: 'In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful') which every Muslim uses before beginning any task. And indeed, sexual intercourse is considered, in orthodox Islam, one of these tasks that any good male Muslim will perform with the help of God. The sexual act becomes what the provocative book *Woman in the Muslim Unconscious* (written under a pen-name by a distinguished Moroccan woman social scientist) has called a *ménage à trois*, an uneven power relationship between God, man and woman!<sup>21</sup> The male character in Ben Jelloun's passage continues after the *Basmala* with a series of gratitude prayers to *Allah* for having provided Zahra's 'warm' body. In translating the Arabic/Islamic prayers into the French language, Ben Jelloun achieves two goals: he renders the French language 'foreign' to its own monolingual native speaker and simultaneously commits sacrilege against the very formulas he translates by placing them in a passage that comes very close to black humor.

After Zahra is raped, she reflects on the violence of the sexual encounter in a passage that is intended by Ben Jelloun as a general, critical

reflection on the meaning of the sexual act in his traditional culture delivered through the voice of a woman:

Etait-ce cela l'amour? Un poignard caressant le dos sous les ténèbres?  
Une violence cinglante qui vous enlace par derrière comme une cible  
au hasard, ponctuée par des incantations et par des prières?

Can this be love? A dagger caressing the back in the dark? A bloody  
violence that grasps you from behind like a haphazard target,  
punctuated by incantations and prayers?<sup>22</sup>

After the publication of *L'Enfant de sable* in 1985, Ben Jelloun was interviewed on *Apostrophes*, the popular French television talk-show which hosted prominent writers and intellectuals. During that interview, he discussed the taboo issues he raises in the novel (and which he pursues in *La Nuit sacrée*). Within the context of orthodox Islamic culture, many of these issues would be considered scandalous, even blasphemous. He argued that his two novels, in effect, could only have been written in French, his second language, which allows the transgressions he makes on his Arabo-Islamic culture. According to him, it would have been impossible to do the same thing in Arabic, a doubly sacred language: at once the language of the Koran and that of his parents.<sup>23</sup>

Ben Jelloun's statements on French television recall the words of Abdelkebir Khatibi, whose plurilingual experience frames this essay:

Pourquoi croyait-il que la langue est plus belle, plus terrible pour  
un étranger?

Why did he believe that language is more beautiful, more terrible, for  
the foreigner?<sup>24</sup>

Having coined the term 'radical bilingualism,' Khatibi's work becomes a consistent articulation of it. Khatibi belonged to the group of Moroccan writers who, in 1966, founded the bilingual literary review *Souffles*, which had a most significant role in redefining the space of the francophone writer in the context of both 'national' and 'world' literatures. However, because of its increasingly leftist ideology, *Souffles* was banned in 1972. But, like many others who belonged to this bilingual literary review, Khatibi has continued to write, always practicing what he preaches, whether it be in his essays, poetry, or novels.

*La Mémoire tatouée*, published in 1971, is Khatibi's autobiographical narrative. As the title might suggest, it is simultaneously a narrative about autobiography.<sup>25</sup> In this sense, *La Mémoire tatouée* becomes a mediation that is double. In this text, Khatibi makes no attempt at reconstructing a linear past. Rather, he actively preserves his tattooed memory; he writes *in* and not outside it, as a means of representing the



torn experience of the colonized, bilingual subject. Khatibi reproduces his mutilated memory, both in his use of the language and in the very structure of his text. The different segmented episodes are reflections on the narrator's colonized, bilingual childhood. The end result is an amalgam of images impressed upon the narrator's imagination as part of his colonial experience:

On connaît l'imagination coloniale: juxtaposer, compartimenter, militariser, découper la ville en zones ethniques, ensabler la culture du peuple dominé. En découvrant son dépaysement, ce peuple errera, hagard, dans l'espace brisé de son histoire. Et il n'y a de plus atroce que la déchirure de la mémoire.

We well know the colonial imagination: juxtapose, compartmentalize, militarize, divide the city into ethnic areas, sand up the culture of the colonized people. In discovering their alienation such a people will wander, distraught, in the crushed space of their own history. And there is nothing more atrocious than the shattering of memory.<sup>26</sup>

Khatibi's text gains its strength from constraints: 'son dépaysement,' 'l'espace brisé de son histoire,' and 'la déchirure de la mémoire.' All these constraints are transformed into creative opportunities, as the narrative proceeds to re-present the imprints of the colonial imagination. Just as Khatibi accepts and parodies his compartmentalized past, so does he accept, and live, his plurilingualism and the layering that must come with it. Towards the end of *La Mémoire tatouée*, the narrator encapsulates his attitude towards his bilingualism and biculturalism in the following manner:

L'Occident est une partie de moi, que je ne peux nier que dans la mesure où je lutte contre tous occidents et orientes qui m'oppriment ou me désenchantent.

The Occident is a part of me that I can deny to the extent that I war against all occidents and orientes that oppress and disenchant me.<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, the subtitle of *La Mémoire tatouée* is *Autobiographie d'un décolonisé*, where the word 'décolonisé' signifies a gesture towards that double movement of decolonization, the beginnings of a radical bilingualism, uninhibited by the constraints of the past or of the present; a war against all oppressive occidents and orientes.

In *Maghreb pluriel*, Khatibi sets himself a double task: to demystify and destigmatize the linguistic landscape of the *maghrib* (i.e., North Africa) and to map out the future of this region in its plurality.<sup>28</sup> Khatibi's article 'Bilinguisme et littérature' begins with what he calls a bad joke:

Nous, les Maghrébins, nous avons mis quatorze siècles pour apprendre la langue arabe (à peu près), plus d'un siècle pour apprendre le français (à peu près); et depuis des temps immémoriaux, nous n'avons pas su écrire le berbère. C'est dire que le bilinguisme et le plurilinguisme ne sont pas, dans ces régions, des faits récents. Le paysage linguistique maghrébin est encore plurilingue: diglossie (entre l'arabe et le dialectal), le berbère, le français, l'espagnol au Nord et au Sud du Maroc.

We North Africans have taken fourteen centuries to learn Arabic (more or less), more than one century to learn French (more or less), and from time immemorial we have not learned how to write Berber. That is to say that bilingualism and plurilingualism are not, in this region, a recent phenomenon. The linguistic landscape of the *Maghrib* is still plurilingual: diglossia (between Arabic and the dialect), Berber, French, Spanish in the north and south of Morocco.<sup>29</sup>

For Khatibi, therefore, the crucial question becomes how to transform this plurilingualism into a radical element that defies compartmentalization and hierarchies. In 'Double critique,' Khatibi defines the path for the postcolonial bilingual writers:

Sommes-nous destinés à porter la violence contre les autres pour leur faire entendre la voix de la raison? A les menacer de guerre, de destruction et de culpabilité immonde pour que l'Occident se retourne contre son auto-suffisance et son ethnocentrisme, maintenant élevés au niveau planétaire? Et pourtant, nous pouvons, Tiers-monde, poursuivre une tierce voie . . . une subversion en quelque sorte double, qui, se donnant le pouvoir de parole et d'action, se met en œuvre dans une différence intraitable.

Are we destined to use violence against others to make them listen to the voice of reason? To threaten war, destruction and vile guilt so that the Occident renounce its self-sufficiency and its ethnocentrism which today encompass the world? And yet, we of the Third World can follow a third way . . . a subversion that is in a sense double which, by seizing the power of word and action, accomplishes itself in an uncompromising difference.<sup>30</sup>

That third way, that double subversion, that uncompromising difference, is indeed what characterizes Khatibi's *Amour bilingue*, in which the question of how one loves as a bilingual becomes the pre-text for his theory and practice of being the *bi-langue*, rather than the *bilingue*. Whereas the *bilingue* would use one language at a time, Khatibi's *bi-langue*, in constant motion between the different layers of language(s),

perpetually maintaining a space 'in between,' requires a reader who can do the same: what Khatibi calls 'la scénographie des doubles. Un mot: déjà deux: déjà un récit.'<sup>31</sup> For as he has insisted on another occasion:

La langue 'maternelle' est à l'œuvre dans la langue étrangère. De l'une à l'autre se déroulent une traduction permanente et un entretien en abîme, extrêmement difficile à mettre au jour.

The 'maternal' language is always at work in the foreign language. Between them occurs a constant process of translation, an abysmal dialogue, very difficult to bring to the light of day.<sup>32</sup>

Rather than simply *tell* about this constant 'translation' from one language to the other, Khatibi consciously *shows* it. In *Amour bilingue*, there is a perpetual migration of signs which takes place between classical Arabic, the spoken Moroccan dialect, and French, to mention only the three main layers that Khatibi juggles, in a constant state of interdependence and intersignification in the text. The following is an example of the practice of the *bilangue*:

Et en français - sa langue étrangère - le *mot* est près de la *mort*, il ne lui manque qu'une seule lettre. . . . Il se *calma* d'un coup, lorsqu'apparut le *mot* arabe *kalma* avec son équivalent savant *kalima* et toute la chaîne de diminutifs, calembours de son enfance: *klima* . . . La diglossie *kal(i)ma* revint sans que disparût ni s'effaçât le mot *mot*. (My italics)

And in French - his foreign language - the word for 'word,' *mot*, is close to the one for 'death,' *la mort*; only one letter is missing. . . . He calmed down instantly when an Arabic word, *kalma*, appeared, *kalma* and its scholarly equivalent, *kalima*, and the whole string of its diminutives which had been the riddles of his childhood: *klima*. . . . The diglossal *kal(i)ma* appeared again without *mot*'s having faded away or disappeared.<sup>33</sup>

Khatibi's constant migration from one system of signs to the other, from one symbolic world to another, is reinforced throughout the text:

Mort: et pour se donner la vie dans ce mot, il fallait parcourir toute la force destructrice de la bi-langue. Dans son parler maternel, la mort est cet au-delà céleste, ce paradis d'enfant.

Death: and to find a way to live in this word, it was necessary to go over all the *bi-langue*'s power of destruction. In his mother tongue, death is a child's idea of heaven, a celestial hereafter.<sup>34</sup>

Both passages are instances of the never-ending and uninterrupted chain of significations and associations which co-exist in the *bi-langue*'s mind.

The process of translation is a perpetual one, and the traces of both classical Arabic and the dialect are always present within the French.

Any reader who approaches the text is expected to perform the same act of perpetual translation. The title page of *Amour bilingue* offers perhaps the most articulate and symbolic rendition of such expectations.<sup>35</sup> The French title appears in bold red letters at the top of the page. At the bottom is its 'translation' written in Arabic calligraphy. This bilingual title page remains semi-readable for the monolingual, just as the text itself would be, if the reader fails to decode its plurilingual strategies. Furthermore, the complete signification of the French title can only be understood in its relationship with the Arabic title: they are interdependent. This is but the beginning of a series of demands which are placed upon the reader, even as he/she gazes at the title page.

Our understanding of the word *amour* in the title depends on the unreadable (i.e., for the monolingual reader) Arabic word *'ishq*, which can signify two things: on the one hand, it can mean earthly passion, and on the other, when read within the context of the Islamic mystical tradition, it will mean one of the higher stages of the mystical experience. The French word *bilingue* is rendered in the Arabic dual form for the word *lisan*, i.e., *lisanayn*. Hence, the 'translation' which appears on the title page, in Arabic calligraphy, is: *'ishq al-lisanayn*. Now, the Arabic title can convey multiple meanings, and it is in this respect that the French title will depend on it for full signification.

The word *lisan* itself can have more than one meaning. On the one hand, *lisan* means tongue, both in the physical and figurative meanings of the word, i.e., both the organ of speech and the language which it utters. Hence, the word *lisanayn* in the title can be read as a sign for the two languages (*langues*), French and Arabic, which are forever simultaneously at work in the bilingual postcolonial writer's mind. This level of signification explains Khatibi's invention of the word *bilangue* in French, as a means to convey the simultaneity of the two languages. On the other hand, the word *lisan* in its dual form *lisanayn* can be read as a sign for the internal divisions within the Arabo-Islamic culture itself. The division between orthodox, institutional Islamic discourse and the popular, mystical tradition which has always been marginalized, and which Khatibi brings into the text as part of his total make-up as a *pluri-langue*. Furthermore, *lisanayn* can be read as the division between classical Arabic (high culture) and the Arabic dialects (popular culture), where the latter have always been devalued. To understand the *pluri-langue* in the text, one must first understand the intricate interplay on the title page.

*Amour bilingue* then is a text which challenges our competence as readers/translators capable of a global reading in this postcolonial world. However, so long as the institutions that form the reader have not

ABDELKEBIR KHATIBI

# Amour bilingue



FATA MORGANA

changed, the works of francophone North African writers will resist and defy colonial and imperialist monolingualism which continues to believe that it can read the world through its own dominant language.

This essay was written in Egypt during the first days of the war in the Persian Gulf. As I look back on the deliberate escalation of the crisis, the increasing sympathetic reactions towards the Iraqi position in face of what has been described as the most horrific warfare in the history of mankind, I cannot but insist on the urgency of the argument I make in this article. If anything, this is indeed the war of the monolingual 'colonialist' and 'imperialist'; a war waged against all attempts at a more 'global' reading of the world. We have only to reflect upon the Spanish poem, quoted in Spanish, and strategically placed in the middle - the 'in between' - of Khatibi's *Amour bilingue* in order to understand the importance of becoming perpetual translators in our reading of a plurilingual world:

Entre tu pueblo y el mío  
 hay un punto y una raya.  
 La raya dice: no hay paso.  
 El punto, vía cerrada.  
 Y así entre todos los pueblos,  
 raya y punto, punto y raya.  
 Con tantas rayas y puntos  
 el mapa es un telegrama.  
 Caminando por el mundo  
 se ven ríos y montañas,  
 se ven selvas y desiertos,  
 pero no puntos ni rayas.  
 Porque esas cosas no existen,  
 sino que fueron trazadas  
 para que mi hambre y la tuya  
 estén siempre separadas.

## NOTES

- 1 George Steiner, *After Babel* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 115-16.
- 2 Abdelkebir Khatibi, *La Mémoire tatouée* (Paris: Denoël, 1971), p. 64. English translations throughout are mine unless otherwise noted.
- 3 Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Love in Two Languages*, trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp. 4-5. Published in French under the title *Amour bilingue* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1983).
- 4 Abdelfattah Kilito, 'Les Mots canins,' in *Du Bilinguisme* (Paris: Denoël, 1985), p. 216.

- 5 Philippe Cardinal, 'Abdelwahab Meddeb: Je suis un autre,' in *Arabies*, November 1986, pp. 87-8.
- 6 Abdelwahab Meddeb, quoted in Jean Dejeux, *Situation de la littérature maghrébine de langue française* (Algiers: Office des Publications Universitaires, 1982), pp. 103-4.
- 7 Abdelwahab Meddeb, quoted in Cardinal, 'Abdelwahab Meddeb: Je suis un autre,' pp. 87-8.
- 8 Assia Djebar, *L'Amour, la fantasia* (Paris: J. C. Lattès, 1985), pp. 15-16. English translation by Dorothy S. Blair, *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* (London and New York: Quartet Books, 1985), p. 7.
- 9 Djebar, *Fantasia*, p. 57. (French text, p. 70.)
- 10 Ibid., p. 215. (French text, p. 241.)
- 11 Ibid., p. 156. (French text, p. 177.)
- 12 Djebar, *L'Amour, la fantasia*, p. 255; *Fantasia*, p. 226.
- 13 Djebar, *Fantasia*, p. 106. (French text, p. 123.)
- 14 Ibid., p. 214. (French text, p. 240.)
- 15 Djebar, *L'Amour, la fantasia*, p. 178; *Fantasia*, p. 156.
- 16 Ibid., p. 178; *Fantasia*, p. 157.
- 17 *Actualité de l'immigration*, 18-25 November 1987, p. 3.
- 18 Tahar Ben Jelloun, *La Nuit sacrée* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), pp. 5-6.
- 19 It is the North African critic Reda Bensmaïa who uses this term in his article on the Algerian writer Kateb Yacine, 'La littérature algérienne face à la langue: le théâtre de Kateb Yacine,' in *Itinéraires et contacts de cultures: Littératures du Maghreb* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985), vol. 4-5, pp. 57-83.
- 20 Ben Jelloun, *La Nuit sacrée*, p. 61.
- 21 Fatma A Sabbah, *Woman in the Muslim Unconscious*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (New York: Pergamon Press, 1984). Published in French under the title *La femme dans l'inconscient musulman* (Paris: Le Sycomore, 1982).
- 22 Ben Jelloun, *La Nuit sacrée*, p. 63.
- 23 *Lamalif* (Casablanca), November 1987, p. 162.
- 24 Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Amour bilingue*, p. 10; *Love in Two Languages*, p. 4.
- 25 Khatibi, *La Mémoire tatouée*.
- 26 Ibid., p. 54.
- 27 Ibid., p. 118.
- 28 Khatibi, *Maghreb pluriel* (Paris: Denoël, 1973).
- 29 Ibid., p. 179.
- 30 Ibid., p. 51.
- 31 Khatibi, *Amour bilingue*, p. 11.
- 32 Marc Gontard, *La Violence du texte*, preface by Abdelkebir Khatibi (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1981), p. 8.
- 33 Khatibi, *Amour bilingue*, p. 10; *Love in Two Languages*, p. 4.
- 34 Ibid., p. 18; *Love in Two Languages*, p. 11.
- 35 See the title page of *Amour bilingue* reproduced here on p. 136. Also see the article by Reda Bensmaïa, 'Traduire ou "blanchir" la langue: *Amour bilingue* d'Abdelkebir Khatibi,' in *Imaginaires de l'autre: Khatibi et la mémoire littéraire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1987), pp. 133-60, for an excellent reading of *Amour bilingue* and Khatibi's work in general.

# TRANSLATION AND CULTURAL HEGEMONY: THE CASE OF FRENCH-ARABIC TRANSLATION

*Richard Jacquemond*

I can speak a little bit of English  
I am the seed that has survived  
I am the fire that has been woken  
I am a Third World child

(Johnny Clegg, 'Third World Child')

Translation is not only the intellectual, creative process by which a text written in a given language is transferred into another. Rather like any human activity, it takes place in a specific social and historical context that informs and structures it, just as it informs and structures other creative processes. In the case of translation, the operation becomes doubly complicated since, by definition, two languages and thus two cultures and two societies are involved. A political economy of translation is consequently bound to be set within the general framework of the political economy of intercultural exchange, whose tendencies follow the global trends of international trade. Thus it is no surprise that the global translation flux is predominantly North-North, while South-South translation is almost nonexistent and North-South translation is unequal: cultural hegemony confirms, to a great extent, economic hegemony. This inequality can be measured in several ways. (1) Translations from languages of the South represent at best 1 or 2 percent of the translated book market in the North, while in the South 98 or 99 percent of this market is made up of books translated from Northern languages.<sup>1</sup> (2) The Southern intellectual production which reaches the North is hardly received beyond very closed circles of specialists and 'concerned' readers (because of their ethnic origins, for instance) and presupposes an operation of translation (whether it be an 'effective' translation or the invisible self-translation done by the Southern author who writes in a Northern language). Conversely, Northern intellectual production is received by Southern readerships on a much broader scale, whether it be through the mediation of translation or in its



original form. (3) Consequently, while the global influence of Southern intellectual production in the North is almost nil, the development of Southern languages and cultures has been and still is deeply affected by the hegemonic Northern languages and cultures that pervade all social activities.

As a result of colonial and postcolonial history, inequality is the main feature of the relationship between Western and Third World languages and cultures, a fact which is bound to carry many implications for North-South translation processes. Meanwhile, because translation theory (as well as literary theory in general) has developed on the almost exclusive basis of the European linguistic and cultural experience, it relies on the implicit postulate of an egalitarian relationship between different linguistic and cultural areas and has yet to integrate the recent results of the sociology of interculturality in the colonial and postcolonial contexts.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter, I will examine these questions through the example of French-Arabic translation. For several theoretical as well as practical reasons, I will focus more specifically on a comparison between French literary production translated and published in Egypt and Egyptian literary production translated and published in France. First, a study encompassing all Francophone and Arabophone countries would have stumbled on crippling difficulties in gathering data, for both the French and Arab publishing industries, unlike their American and British counterparts, have not yet succeeded in constructing a transnational market. The focus on France and Egypt imposed itself, for they are, each in its own linguistic area, the biggest book markets and the dominant producers of literary works. Another reason to focus on the Egyptian book market was that it is almost exclusively composed of Arabic writings, while in the *Maghrib* countries, for instance, books written in French (whether imported or locally produced) still represent close to 50 percent of the total book sales, thus complicating the enquiry and clouding the issue of translation. Finally, my personal itinerary, from the social sciences to Arabic studies, then translator of Egyptian literature and, for the last three years, director of the translation program at the French embassy in Cairo, has allowed me to reflect on translation processes both in France and Egypt from the perspective of the insider-outsider at once here and there.

### **EGYPTIAN TRANSLATION IN THE PRECOLONIAL AND COLONIAL ERAS: A LIMITED ACCULTURATION**

Translation from European languages in modern Egypt began in the years 1830–40, as one of the means used by Muhammad Ali's incipient state in its attempt at closing the intellectual and technical gap between Egypt and Europe. Understanding the urgency of mastering European languages for political purposes, he sent a mission of Egyptian students

to France, under the supervision of a young *shaykh*, Rifa'a Al-Tahtawi (1801-73), who founded upon his return the School of Languages (*Madrasat al-alsun* [1835-49]), where he trained the first generation of Egyptian translators. A survey of the translations published in those days confirms that translation, at this early stage, did not spring from a genuine interest in European culture *per se*, but rather aimed at satisfying the needs of the young Egyptian state: the translations dealt with history and geography, as well as pure and applied sciences. It is significant that the first European literary text to find its way into Arabic - Fénelon's *Aventures de Télémaque* - was translated by Tahtawi during his exile in Khartoum.<sup>3</sup> This was to remain his only literary translation, for as soon as he regained the khedive's grace, he started a new 'Translation Bureau' where he directed the translation of the French legal codes (1863-8) upon the order of Isma'il.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, along with this utilitarian pattern appeared a new interest in the translation of literary works, and in poetry and theatre rather than the novel. The predilection for poetry was not surprising, because of the longstanding Arabic poetic tradition. The Arab translators' interest in theatre is more of a surprise at first sight, for Arabic culture did not know theatre before its introduction through colonial contact. The fact is, however, that if no artistic form resembling 'theatre' was recognized by the dominant, written culture, the most probable reason is that the traditional focus of Orientalist studies on writing led to an underestimation of oral, 'popular' forms of culture. Such oral culture included, especially in Egypt, original forms of public performance which undoubtedly paved the way for the reception of Occidental forms of theatre in Egypt. Otherwise we would not be able to understand how Egyptian culture could re-create these forms by and for itself much more quickly and for a much larger audience than other artistic forms it also imported from the West, especially modern literary forms.<sup>5</sup>

The limited influence of Western literary forms on Arabic narrative at that time seems clear not only in the French works chosen for translation, but also in the dominant technique of translation. For this consisted most frequently in a very free transposition of the French narrative and actually was not called 'translation' (*tarjama*), but 'adaptation' (*iqtibas*), 'arabization' (*tar'ib*), or even 'egyptianization' (*tamsir*). The French text was not treated as a whole which ought to be respected and fully rendered; rather, it was completely transformed into something familiar to the Arab readership in its style, form and content. This very free relationship with Western culture also appears in the titles of the translated works: the French titles were often 'arabized' to catch the Arabic reader's attention, either in the Arabic tradition of rhymed titles or in a more modern fashion. Furthermore, these adaptations sometimes

neglected to make any mention of the French author, even as they designated the Arabic translator. Some of these adaptations were done so successfully that their author grew much more famous than the French author: for example, those of Mustafa Al-Manfaluti (1876-1924) have been constantly reprinted in Egypt and other Arab countries throughout this century, while nobody, with the exception of a few scholars, remembers the names of their original authors.<sup>6</sup>

This 'naturalization' of foreign literary production by Egyptian translators is a clear sign of a cultural independence from the West, which was preserved among the educated Arab elite until the beginning of the twentieth century despite political and economic domination. Until the 1900s and 1910s, the openness of this elite towards Western (mainly French) intellectual production was limited by the national culture's value system. These early characteristics of the translation process remained dominant during the first half of the twentieth century. However, more exhaustive and 'accurate' translations started to appear, mainly produced, not by specialists of transposition such as al-Manfaluti, but by intellectuals who were first of all creative writers, such as Taha Husayn (1889-1973), translator of Racine (*Andromaque* [1935]), Sophocles (*Antigone* [1938]) and Voltaire (*Zadig* [1947]). Significantly, such authors were members of the Egyptian intellectual elite who had the deepest and most intimate knowledge of Western culture, often after spending part of their formative years in European universities.

Here, obviously, acculturation had gone deeper: we find in writers-translators such as Taha Husayn a new, genuine interest in European narrative, combined with the ambition of 'elevating' Arabic narrative 'to the level' of its Western counterpart. This appears both in their effort to give more 'accurate' translations (to establish the ability of the Arabic language to 'adapt itself to foreign narrative forms') and in the priorities they set for themselves as translators: they turned to what has been defined by Western culture as its classics, thus imposing them upon their national culture without questioning the validity of such a transposition of a Western value system.

The emergence of this 'cultural schizophrenia' in the field of translation coincided with the broad deepening of Egypt's cultural colonization, which manifested itself in the emergence of a local occidentalized elite who mastered foreign languages and consumed books primarily written in French or English. However, the Arabic language was never banned from education, a factor which allowed for the presence of a strong Arabic book market in Egypt throughout the colonial period and, consequently, opened up a limited space for translation. In other words, in Egypt the split between national and imported cultures was never complete, so that Western intellectual production could be integrated through and by the national language.

## EGYPTIAN TRANSLATION IN THE POSTCOLONIAL ERA: FROM ACCULTURATION TO CULTURAL DECOLONIZATION

Around the middle of the century, translated literature was growing more popular among Egyptian readers, if we judge by the success of the first cheap, popular collections such as *Riwayat al-Jayb* ('Pocket Novels') or *Riwayat al-Hilal*, which introduced a great number of abridged translations of French literature: novels by Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo, and Balzac, along with the adventure stories of Jules Verne, Ponson du Terrail (*Rocambole*), and Maurice Leblanc (*Arsène Lupin*), the most popular French writer in Arabic (more than a hundred translations). Besides adventure and mystery, Egyptian translators had a noteworthy predilection for moralizing, melodramatic novels and for rather conventional writers such as Paul Bourget, Anatole France, André Maurois, i.e., for a literature conforming to the dominant religious and moral values of the Egyptian readership. But the large diffusion of translated literature in a culture which was alien to the very forms of modern fiction was in itself a sign of the deepening of the acculturation process.

Nevertheless, translation did not gain real momentum until the 1952 Revolution: while in the 1940s, from 30 to 50 translated books were published annually in Egypt, this average number increased to 85 between 1952 and 1957 (510 translated titles, out of 5,573 published books, i.e., 9.2 percent) and then close to 300 between 1958 and 1967 (2,941 translated titles out of 26,633 published books, i.e., 11.4 percent). Beginning in 1968, we witness a decrease of the global book production and an even more noticeable decrease in the number of translations: an average of 180 translations a year from 1968 to 1972 (905 translations out of 10,904 books, i.e., 8.3 percent) and then an average of 100 from 1973 to 1982 (1,045 translations out of 18,723 books, i.e., 5.6 percent).<sup>7</sup> We don't have more recent figures, but everything seems to indicate that the number of books published in Egypt grew significantly in the last decade, while the number of translations, although on the rise too, remained very low: for 1990, from 150 to 200 translations out of 8,000 or 9,000 published books. The proportion of translations, which had attained more than 10 percent in the 1960s, decreased to around 5 percent in the 1970s and 2 to 3 percent in the 1980s.

In a way, the remarkable increase of translations in the years from 1952 to 1967 was a direct result of the end of colonization: it was made possible by the loss of influence of foreign languages in the educational system and, consequently, in the book market. More crucially, it indicates that Egypt's political independence, contrary to the general assumption, was not followed by a greater assimilation of Western culture. Rather, the increasing interest in translation shows that the openness which char-

acterized Egyptian culture during the 'cosmopolitan, liberal age' (1919-52) was generally preserved; put simply, in the new context of reaffirmation of the national language, this openness was more than ever dependent on translation. It was further helped by new, deliberate state policies whose objective was at the same time pedagogical ('educate the people') and political (support for the 'revolutionary mobilization of the masses'). The best example of this policy as regards translation is the Thousand Books project (*Mashru' al-Alf Kitab*), launched in 1955 with the explicit purpose of allowing the Egyptian audience to read the most essential books of modern world culture in cheap, subsidized paperback editions. These policies were relatively successful because the regime was able to mobilize an intellectual elite who, since its formative years during the prerevolutionary period, had maintained a closeness or familiarity with Western culture which would diminish in later generations. At the same time, this elite found new outlets for its production in the lower-middle and working classes which, thanks to free public schooling, acceded for the first time to the consumption of modern cultural goods.

As a result, the Nasser era appears as the climax of the diffusion of French literary production in Egypt. This is further confirmed by various indications: (1) the popularity of French novels in more or less abridged Arabic versions, which represent around two-thirds of the French novels published in Arabic between 1952 and 1967 and are often reprinted or retranslated; (2) the publication of new, complete translations of a number of French literary works previously published in adapted translations; and (3) the huge interest in French post-war intellectual production. The diffusion, from Egypt, of the first Arabic translations of Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and later of Beckett and Ionesco,<sup>8</sup> almost coincided with the diffusion of these works in other languages,<sup>8</sup> and their reception was all the more remarkable since these works were more alien to the values of an Islamic society, as we would expect them to be, than most of the previous translations.

This period, often referred to by today's Egyptian intelligentsia as the 'golden age of translation', ended abruptly in 1967. From then on, translation was deeply affected by the crisis of the Egyptian publishing industry: considerably weakened by the grave deficiencies which characterized the administration of the public sector in the 1960s, it later fell victim to the general withdrawal of the state from cultural affairs during Sadat's rule, and to the general boycott imposed on Egypt's exports by other Arab countries after the peace treaty with Israel (1979). This decline of Egypt's position in the global Arab publishing industry is reflected in translation: since the mid-seventies, Arabic translations of leading French writers and intellectuals have been published in Beirut and, more recently, in Tunis and Casablanca. This geographical shift has been accompanied by a cultural one: the growing interest in translating

French books in Lebanon (and, since the 1980s, in the *Maghrib* countries) coincides with these countries' return to their common national language after the end of French colonization. However, in these countries the Arabic language has been much more influenced by the French language than in Egypt. At the same time, French linguistic and cultural colonization, much deeper than the British one, has persisted among their elites long after political independence. As a result, the Lebanese and Maghrebian 'schools' of translation are very different from their Egyptian counterpart in several respects. First, a survey of the books they have chosen for translation reveals a better knowledge of contemporary French cultural production, which in turn indicates a deeper cultural dependency. Second, as a consequence, these schools adopt a much more literal conception of translation and produce an Arabic language much more gallicized than the Egyptian one, both in its syntax and in its lexicon, to the extent that some of these translations are unintelligible if their reader is not able to guess the French word or sentence behind its Arabic rendering, which is as transparent as a calque. At the same time, the influence of English on the Arabic language has become stronger throughout the Arab world due to the increasing American presence, while the efforts of Arab cultural elites to construct a common cultural market have been constantly frustrated by political divisions. Hence, the - not-so-rare - reader who has access to Arabic written production published all the way from Casablanca to Baghdad cannot but feel that modern written Arabic, despite the fiction of one, unique language unchanged since Koranic revelation, is splitting into various sub-languages whose specificities are a result of both exogene (English or French) and endogene (the various dialects) influences.

However, the Egyptian experience during the last two decades shows that other changes are taking place, and these may turn out to be even more important, as regards translation, than previous developments. Deep transformations in the relationship between the book and its users are currently taking place: the last decade has witnessed a real recovery of the Egyptian publishing industry,<sup>9</sup> which has been accompanied by the emergence of a new readership whose educational background and cultural interests are quite different from its predecessor's. Unfortunately, the lack of precise statistics on the production and diffusion of the book, not to mention sociological surveys of reading practices, makes it difficult for us to go further than a few hints about the translated book market which are based on direct observation.

My first observation concerns literature. It seems that the typical consumer of fiction in the 1950s, who used to read translated literature for both entertainment and cultural improvement, has almost disappeared. This certainly has something to do with world-wide transformations of cultural practices (the new emphasis on public education, the growing

consumption of TV programs and videotapes, etc.), but the main explanation might be that the Western cultural model of production and consumption of 'fiction' has failed to penetrate Egyptian culture deeply. Almost all the paperback collections that popularized French literature in the 1950s and 1960s have now disappeared, and their present counterparts aim to satisfy the new demands of the readership for two kinds of literary production: 'Islamic books' by popular preachers and political essays treating internal problems. Moreover, this dwindling interest in literature includes modern Egyptian (and Arabic) narrative: except for a few established names, whose sales remain very modest, Egyptian creative writers are rarely read by their fellow citizens, so that one cannot but question the status of creative writing in contemporary Egyptian culture.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, the new trends in book consumption have affected the translation of non-literary works, which tends now to focus on books dealing in one way or another with Egypt: more than half of the translations from French published in the 1980s concern Egyptology, Orientalism, or Arab, Islamic, and Third World affairs. In this case, translation can no longer be seen as springing from the urge to have access to Western intellectual production, but rather as a way for the national culture to examine and reassure itself in the other's mirror.

One can go further and suggest that these observations indicate a more profound trend that can be characterized as a new 'self-centeredness' in Egyptian culture, and this should be understood in the global context of what can be defined as the historical moment of 'cultural decolonization.' For political independence in several Third World countries has actually been followed by a deepening of the acculturation processes, especially within the educated minorities who had access to book consumption. It was only later, when it became clear that the first generation of political leaders had failed to break the vicious circle of dependency, that more and more Third World intellectuals started to question their relationship to Western culture. As regards Egypt, the beginning of this process can be precisely dated to June 1967, with the traumatizing defeat of the Six Day War. Moreover, the weaker influence of translation on Egypt's Arabic in comparison to other Arab countries indicates that the process of cultural decolonization has gone further here than elsewhere.

In this context, translation is being mobilized for the sake of the re-affirmation, re-appropriation, and re-examination of the national cultural identity, and as a means of differentiating one's self from the other. This is why in Egypt Roger Garaudy is now the best-selling French author in Arabic. Garaudy was first translated into Arabic in the late 1960s, as a Marxist critic and philosopher. Later, he broke with Marxism and wandered for a while from the Christian left to environmentalism, before settling for Islam, which he has been defending with

a neophyte's zeal in a number of essays, all of which have been published in Arabic translations in Egypt and elsewhere. The translation of Garaudy's work may feed the egos of Egyptian Muslims and help them to distance themselves from Western culture, but I wonder if it contributes in any way to improving their self-knowledge. Conversely, other kinds of translations have reached the Egyptian readership and are received in a more constructive way - especially the increasing number of translations from French dealing with national history, from ancient Egypt to the present.

Throughout this section, I have been raising a number of problems that are now receiving more attention in the field of literary theory, which increasingly concerns itself with the political economy of literary production and its reception and interlinguistic, intercultural relations in the postcolonial context. These sociopolitical dimensions have yet to be integrated into translation theory, along with the social-science methodologies which they imply. In the limited space of this chapter, I can only highlight these problems and assert the need to examine them in the general framework of the unequal cultural exchanges in the post-colonial world, hoping that translation studies will pay more attention to these largely unexplored areas.

Turning to Egyptian literature in French translation, we will find related problems, but now inverted: just as translation is affected by cultural dependency, so it is by cultural domination.

### **FRENCH TRANSLATION OF EGYPTIAN LITERATURE: A STATISTICAL VIEW**

Arabic literature appears in the French market as the most translated non-European literary production, with an average of 10 to 20 translations published each year in the 1980s (out of 2,000 to 3,000 translated books). Yet Arabic translations are not only marginal in the translated book market, but also in the Arab literary production published in France, since the latter is, now more than ever, dominated by Arab authors writing in French: during the 1980s, Arab-Francophone production represented something between 200 and 300 titles a year in both fiction and nonfiction. Arab-Francophone writing has gained more visibility in recent years, when two authors entered the best-seller lists, namely the Moroccan Tahar Ben Jelloun (his novel *La Nuit sacrée* sold more than 1.5 million copies after it won the 1987 Prix Goncourt) and the Lebanese Amin Maalouf (his two historical novels *Léon l'Africain* and *Samarcande* have sold nearly half a million copies since 1987). Nevertheless, since we are more specifically concerned with Egypt, we have to add that almost all of this Arab-Francophone writing comes from ex-French



colonies (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Lebanon), and nearly nothing from Egypt.<sup>11</sup>

But the point to stress, as regards the French book production dealing with Arab culture, is that it remains predominantly written by French and Western authors. A survey conducted by the Institute of the Arab World in Paris for a colloquium it organized on 'The Arab World in French Intellectual Life' in 1988 showed that 529 of the 18,800 books published in France in 1986 related in one way or another to Arab culture, but 500 of them were written in French, and only 29 were translated from the Arabic and other Oriental languages.<sup>12</sup> The wide gap between the two figures reconfirms the epigraph from Marx which Edward Said quotes in his book *Orientalism*:<sup>13</sup> 'They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented.' In fact, Said could have completed Marx's statement by adding: 'and if they are to represent themselves, they will have to do so using *our* language.'

This hegemony of Western discourse over the Arab world's endogenous discourse ensures the prevalence of dominant Western representations of Arab culture. My point can be illustrated with two examples from the best-seller lists in France over the past few years. First, Betty Mahmoody's *Jamais plus sans ma fille* was the best-selling book in all categories in 1990 (1,910,000 copies). It is the testimony of an American woman who, after marrying an Iranian, followed him to postrevolutionary Iran only to realize that she could not cope with such a drastic cultural change, whereupon she was forced to fight a painful battle to be permitted to leave the country with her daughter. The second example is Gilles Perrault's *Notre ami le roi* (about 300,000 copies in six months), a violent attack on Hassan II, King of Morocco, focusing on his poor record as regards human rights. Without questioning the sincerity of these authors and the moral validity of their causes, one cannot but wonder about the relation between these remarkable successes and the kind of representation of the Orient that they confirm and hence reinforce. In both cases, we witness the 'barbarian and despotic' Orient: the despotism of the man as husband and head of the household in Mahmoody's book, the despotism of the ruler over his subjects who live according to the law of his *bon plaisir* in Perrault's book. Although apparently not related to translation, these remarks are of crucial importance in understanding the real stakes in the translation process. For there is a continuous interaction between Western and specifically French representations of Arabic culture and the linguistic, cultural, and political economy of translation from Arabic into French.

## THE ORIENTALIST PARADIGM

A typology of French translation of Arabic intellectual production based on the criterion of reception will first have to draw a broad distinction between two separate markets: on the one hand, Orientalist academic production, whose diffusion usually does not go beyond the limited audience of the academic field, and the more 'popular' output, destined to reach a wider readership. Since the nineteenth century, Orientalism, like any academic field, has had its own book market in France and other Western countries, with its own specialized reviews (*Revue des Etudes islamiques*, *Bulletins* and *Annales* of the French Institutes of Cairo and Damascus, etc.) and publishing houses (*Société Asiatique*, *Vrin*, *Maisonneuve & Larose*, etc.) which, along with original studies, continue to publish Orientalist translations from Arabic.

The Orientalist paradigm has influenced to a great extent the linguistics and semiotics of translation, thus imposing its own conceptual framework. A comprehensive study has yet to be undertaken of the techniques and strategies of the Orientalist tradition of translation from Arabic. For our purposes, suffice it to say that since Orientalism is first and foremost an area of scholarship, it is no wonder that the criterion of good translation in the Orientalist paradigm is one of 'scientific accuracy.' The translation is not meant to be read by a nonprofessional reader. It addresses only the very small and closed milieu of the discipline, using its explicit and implicit codes, jargon, etc. These academic canons and techniques of translation are taught to the young Orientalist who learns how to reproduce them throughout his university career: in France, a remarkably high number of pre-doctoral and doctoral theses consist in the translation of an Arabic text (whether classical or modern) accompanied by footnotes, a glossary, and a commentary. Under the tyranny of scientific accuracy, the Arabic text is often rendered too literally, and the reading experience is interrupted by the translator's notes and explanations. The nonprofessional reader who, out of good will and mere curiosity (if they exist), chooses to read such a translation is soon rebuked by its harshness, its radical strangeness, and its lack of appeal and learns to satisfy himself with the second-hand knowledge he is provided through the Orientalists' writings.

Not surprisingly, such a conception of translation reinforces the same representations Orientalism has created: it inscribes in the structure of language itself the image of a 'complicated Orient,' as de Gaulle said, irremediably strange and different. At the same time, it allows Orientalism to reassert its status as the indispensable and authorized mediator between Arabo-Islamic and Western cultures.

This is not to say that all Orientalist translations from Arabic into French are badly written or unreadable, for literary talent was and is

undoubtedly distributed among Orientalists, just as it is among other categories of intellectuals. But my point goes beyond this. To exemplify it, let us consider the translation of Naguib Mahfouz's novel *Yawm Qutila l-Za'im* (*The Day the Leader was Assassinated*) by André Miquel,<sup>14</sup> one of the most distinguished French Orientalists and a poet and author of two novels. In a brief foreword, Miquel explains to his reader that the action of 'the novel takes place in Egypt during the last months of Anwar El-Sadat's reign,' and that he resorted to footnotes 'strictly when necessary for the comprehension of the text.' I counted 54 footnotes in the 77 pages of the novel. What is in question is not the translator's obvious talent as a writer, but his assumption of a totally ignorant reader, confronted with a totally new world, unable to come to grips with it unless he is guided step by step by the steady and authoritative hand of the omniscient Orientalist-translator, trained to decipher the otherwise unfathomable mysteries of the Orient.

This feature is characteristic of the Orientalist ethos: it assumes that the Arabic text is not readable in translation unless its implicit meaning is made explicit by the translator, thus limiting further than necessary its possible readings and sometimes even misleading the reader. For example, in his translation of poems by the Iraqi Badr Chaker Al-Sayyab, the same André Miquel adds a footnote to the last poem's title - 'Iqbâl et la nuit' - to explain to his reader that Iqbâl is the name of a 'philosophe et poète indien (1873-1938) de religion musulmane, qui privilégie la tradition soufie. . .' while 'Iqbâl' is actually the name of Sayyab's wife!<sup>15</sup> In such a case, the translator seems to have imposed on the text an implicit meaning of his own, thus disclosing not its mystery, but rather his own need to reassert both the other's alterity and the Orientalist's inevitable mediation.

## BETWEEN EXOTICIZATION AND NATURALIZATION

Given the above picture, it is no surprise that the reception of modern Egyptian literature in France has been conditioned by two main factors that may seem contradictory, but are actually complementary: its relative conformity to (1) dominant French representations of Arabic culture and society and (2) dominant French ideological, moral, and aesthetic values.

The dominant French representations of Arabic culture have been framed, in the field of literature, by numerous translations of *The Arabian Nights* since Galland's first translation in the eighteenth century: in a survey covering two decades (from 1948 to 1968), Nada Tomiche counted 78 translations of *Mille et une nuits* published in France, compared to 14 translations of classical works and 19 of modern ones.<sup>16</sup> Throughout the last two centuries, *The Arabian Nights* has undoubtedly been the main literary source of French representations of

the Arab world, in both their negative (the 'barbarian' Orient) and positive (the 'magical' Orient) dimensions.

Conversely, modern Egyptian production was consistently asked to conform to dominant French ideological, moral, and aesthetic values in order to be translated and received in France. This becomes evident when we look at the first Egyptian works that found their way into translation, namely, Taha Husayn's *Al-Ayyam* (first published in Arabic in 1929)<sup>17</sup> and Tawfiq Al-Hakim's *Yawmiyyat Na'ib fi l-Aryaf* (first published in Arabic in 1937 and immediately translated).<sup>18</sup> To understand how these autobiographical works were received in France, one has to stress that they were written by occidentalized bourgeois writers who, in their lifestyles and moral and aesthetic values, were closer to their foreign readership than to traditional Egyptian society. Furthermore, the works chosen for translation were those that stressed the gap between the authors' modernist ideals and the 'backwardness' of traditional society (according to their descriptions). While the authors' purpose was obviously social critique, their French readers saw in their works a description of the flaws of Egyptian society, confirming both radical alterity and French self-representations in a way all the more gratifying since it came through the other's voice. Studying the case of Tawfiq Al-Hakim's *Yawmiyyat Na'ib fi l-Aryaf*, Nada Tomiche explains how this novel, 'constructed on the author's experience of the absence of communication between government employees and peasants overtaken by legal procedures imported from the West and ill adapted to rural Egypt's needs,' is described by the French writer Jean Grenier as 'the first book I was recommended to read on Egypt's customs.' Tomiche comments:

This novel thus allows Grenier to gather information on 'Egypt's customs,' namely, the dire poverty in which peasants are sunk, rather than serving the reformist will of the writer, whose main purpose was to illustrate the unadaptability of legal procedures borrowed from the West.<sup>19</sup>

When dealing with more recent translations, Tomiche argues that as they grow in number, the French readership begins to realize that the Arabic Orient might be something with an *identity* of its own, and thus that the oscillating movement between exoticization and naturalization which characterized their reception tends to lose its force. Although her judgement is then supported by a penetrating analysis of some of these recent translations, I will argue that if such a change has happened (which remains debatable), it may be for other reasons.

As a matter of fact, the modern Arab literary output, which has grown considerably since the first pioneering generations, has been translated and published in France (with some delay) since the beginning of the 1970s, boosted by a new historical context at both the international (the

'Islamic resurgence') and the national (the increasing visibility of the Arab minority settled in France) levels. For these very reasons, the once extremely closed Orientalist field has been opened to a somewhat larger group of producers and consumers. Thanks to these developments, about a hundred translations of modern Arabic literary works are now available in the market, close to half of them coming from Egypt, which undoubtedly marks significant progress compared to the 1960s. However, it should be stressed that for a long time, these publications remained the quasi-exclusive privilege of a new publisher, Sindbad, who deliberately specialized in books dealing with Arabo-Islamic culture, but whose main market was not France, but the *Maghrib* countries.<sup>20</sup> The very limited sales of these translations in the French market shows that they rarely found their way to the ordinary reader, with the notable exception of the work of Naguib Mahfouz, especially after he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Arabic literature in French translation has yet to obtain the same treatment as Arab-Francophone literature. The latter has received much attention from academic and journalistic critics, as well as the general readership: its better-known representative, Tahar Ben Jelloun, has sold close to two million copies of his work since he was awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1987, while others such as Rachid Boudjedra, Abdelkebir Khatibi, and Assia Djebar maintain a strong presence. Conversely, modern Arabic literature remains neglected by academia (only *one* active university professor in France, Nada Tomiche, is a specialist in modern Arabic literature). Newspapers and magazines whose literary critics review diverse Latin American, English, or Japanese authors still prefer to turn to the 'expert' on Arab or Oriental affairs when asked to review a novel translated from Arabic. To sum up, modern Arabic literature has yet to free itself from the Orientalist ghetto, even if the latter is a little more roomy than it used to be.<sup>22</sup>

But these considerations do not suffice to explain the situation. In fact, a closer look at the market will show that beyond these problems, the ability of Egyptian writers in French translation to break with the (widened) Orientalist field continues to depend, first and foremost, on the dialectics of exoticization and naturalization. To make this clear, I will describe a recent experience of my own, following the French publication of the Egyptian philosopher Fouad Zakariya's political essays in a collective translation which I directed.<sup>23</sup> The author's central thesis is that, despite the pretensions of its 'fundamentalist' intellectuals and militants, Islam as a religion does not imply a specific political theory and actually coexists with different kinds of political systems; therefore, he argues, the Muslims should admit once and for all that secularism is not an 'imported ideology,' but a necessary step on the way to cultural and political development. We undertook this translation with the aim of trying to rectify the dominant representation, in France as in the rest of

the Western world, of an Arab cultural and political scene gradually abandoned to 'fundamentalist Islam.' The book was released on 24 January 1991 during the Gulf war. In a context obviously contributing to aggravate mutual misrepresentations, it was received as a confirmation - even more authentic since it was produced by a native - of the all-devastating power of Islamic fundamentalism, and of the universality of liberal democratic principles.<sup>24</sup> It confirmed the West's representation of an irremediably different Arab world, as well as its self-representation as the inventor and owner of the only truly universal values. Leaving aside any value judgment on the authors, the dynamics of the reception of Fouad Zakariya's book in France were quite comparable to those of the reception of Roger Garaudy's translations in Egypt.

Turning now to fiction, a comparison between the reception of Naguib Mahfouz in French translation with that of a few works by younger Egyptian writers will provide additional evidence for this pattern of cross-cultural exchange: the further Arabic work goes in asserting both pre-existing Western representations of Arab alterity and Western values, the higher the chances are for it to find its way into translation and, subsequently, to reach a large audience. It is arguable that the main reason for Mahfouz's relative success has to be located within his work rather than in his Nobel Prize. Because of his age (he was born in 1911) and his formation, Mahfouz is, of all the Egyptian authors newly translated, the closest to the earlier generations of bourgeois, acculturated writers. This is confirmed by his whole intellectual and political biography and is naturally evident in his writing: strong, well-constructed realistic novels which conform to the classic Western canons in the tradition of Dickens and Zola and give the Western reader 'his money's worth,' i.e., a thorough account of Egyptian social life (Mahfouz's numerous works do not all fit into this broad definition, but the ones that do not are never chosen for translation: the post-1967 short stories, for instance). It is these same factors that made him the most acceptable Arab candidate for a Nobel Prize, and that, more than the prize itself, led to his being more widely translated and read. Against the banal dichotomy of universality and specificity, much used by both Arab and Western critics after the Nobel Prize, a comprehensive political economy of Mahfouz's translations and their reception in the West would show that what is at stake here is the more subtle game of complementary-contradictory exoticization and naturalization.

Although I cannot undertake such an analysis here, I can strengthen my point by comparing the Mahfouz case with that of the younger generation of Egyptian writers, usually referred to as the 'generation of the 1960s' (although most of their production was not published before the 1970s). This generation includes Youssef Al Quaid, Soleiman Fayyad, Gamal Ghitany, Sonallah Ibrahim, and Maguid Toubia. Beyond their

differences, these writers share a number of common characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations, and that have made them question and radically transform modern Arabic writing. The identity crisis following the 1967 defeat has led them to a sort of *tabula rasa* which may be taken as the first expression of the new historical context I characterized earlier as 'cultural decolonization.' This appears in the narrative forms and strategies they develop: although they continue to use the canonical terms 'novel' (*riwaya*) and 'short story' (*qissa, qissa qasira, uqsusa*), most of their works no longer fit into the Western definitions of these literary genres. Moreover, the most promising of them deliberately turn away from Western narrative forms and rediscover, recycle and even subvert traditional Arabic forms, inventing for the first time a fully modern Arabic narrative. Such Egyptian writers (as well as their Maghrebian, Lebanese, and Palestinian counterparts) are much less accessible to the Western reader. For this very reason, they rarely find their way into translation. A comparative survey of the Arabic texts and few translations that have been published in France would raise many questions. (1) To what extent do the literary canons which implicitly govern the French publishers' choices coincide with or differ from Egyptian literary canons? And are the Egyptian canons those of the literary 'establishment' or those of the 'underground,' 'informal' literary field? (2) To what extent are the French publishers' choices determined by (a) their own representations of modern Arabic culture and those of the readership as they imagine them or (b) the representations imposed on them by the 'experts' on Arabic literature they have to resort to as readers, consultants, etc. (a mediation they do not need when they examine literary works by American, English, German and other foreign writers)? (3) What is the impact of the 'underdevelopment' of the Egyptian literary field (erratic publication, the publishers' lack of professionalism, the small readership) on the translation choices and on the translation process itself? Why is it a commonplace, within the small milieu of French translators from the Arabic, to say that 'such a translation is better written than the original'? (4) How can the translator avoid the complementary temptations of exoticizing and naturalizing the Arabic text, while he is pressed to do so by the publisher? Should he recycle the narrative strategies of Arab-Francophone writers as a means to assert and preserve the Arabic text's *difference*? (5) How does the perspective of translation influence Arabic writing? How far is the writer induced by the eagerness to be translated to anticipate - consciously or not - the foreign reader's expectations while writing in Arabic, just as the most popular Arab-Francophone writers do? All these questions are well addressed in the following statement by Gamal Ghitany, whose novel *Zayni Barakat* has been translated into nine languages, including French and English:

The translation of Arabic literature remains determined by the

global relationship between Orient, especially the Arabic Orient, and Occident. The latter's perceptions are biased by prejudices constructed through a long and complex mutual history. The Occidental reader prefers to turn to works which confirm his prejudices and his representation of the Orient. In return, some Arabic authors, in their search for a larger non-Arabic audience, feed these biased representations by producing either touristic literature or one that amplifies the Oriental contradictions as imagined by the Occident.

Translation into another language, whether or not this language is hegemonic, does not add anything to the value of a work if this value has not been first recognized in its original culture. More precisely, translation can shed new light, but cannot add any extra value. On the contrary, the excessive popularity of certain literary works outside their original culture - which would be purely anecdotal if it were not related to considerations where art matters less than race or politics - does more harm than good to them.<sup>25</sup>

## TRANSLATION AND CULTURAL HEGEMONY

After having examined in turn the politics of French to Arabic and Arabic to French translation, we will conclude by drawing the broad lines of a translation theory in the context of cultural hegemony-dependency. For this purpose, we will oppose two ideal types of translation in two successive moments of the cultural encounter, namely, the colonial moment and the postcolonial one. It should be clear that these two moments are defined as ideal types and do not necessarily coincide with political colonization-decolonization; rather, they constantly coexist and will continue to do so in every colonial and postcolonial cross-cultural exchange.

In the colonial moment, the opposed paradigms of translation can be defined as follows. (1) In translation from a hegemonic language-culture into a dominated one, the translator appears as the servile mediator through whom foreign-made linguistic-cultural objects are integrated without question into his own dominated language-culture, thus aggravating its schizophrenia. (2) In translation from a dominated language-culture into a hegemonic one, the translator appears as the authoritative mediator through whom the dominated language-culture is maintained outside the limits of the self and at the same time adapted to this self in order for it to be able to consume the dominated linguistic-cultural object.

In the postcolonial moment, this double paradigm is put into question. (1) The resistance of the dominated language-culture to neo-colonial linguistic-cultural hegemony leads it eventually to situate



translation within the framework of an 'Occidentalism,'<sup>26</sup> i.e., an apparatus of knowledge in the hegemonic language-culture elaborated from its own point of view, which works (a) before translation, as a filter by which it determines, according to its specific needs and priorities, the conditions of validity of the importation of Western intellectual production, and (b) within the process of translation itself, as an act of appropriating the hegemonic linguistic-cultural object by the translator in order to naturalize it in the dominated language-culture. (2) Within the hegemonic language-culture, the growing weight of the cultural minority's intellectual production eventually precipitates the emergence of (a) a critique of the ideological and institutional apparatus which frames our representation of non-Western cultures, especially within translation processes, in the alienating dialectics of exoticization-naturalization of the other and (b) a critique of the 'exportability' of Western sciences and humanities - including translation theory - to non-Western cultures: if Western intellectual production, just like other Western commodities, is 'good for us,' i.e., relevant to Western societies, it is not by necessity 'good for them,' i.e., relevant to Third World societies. Such a critique is bound to lead ultimately to a critique of 'universality' which, because of the very nature of the act of translating, should be a priority for translation theory.

## NOTES

- 1 These figures, which are approximate, are derived from *Le Grand Atlas des Littératures* (Paris: Encyclopedia Universalis, 1990), pp. 392-3.
- 2 For a discussion of this issue, see Samia Mehrez's chapter in this volume.
- 3 *Mawaqit' al-Aflak fi Waqai'i' Tilimak* (Beirut, 1867), p. 792. Tahtahtawi's choice may seem weird to us today; as a matter of fact, Fénelon's *Aventures de Télémaque*, a moral digression on Homer, was the best-selling book in France during the 1830s.
- 4 Gilbert Delanoue, *Moralistes et politiques musulmans dans l'Égypte du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (1798-1882)* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1982), II: 618-30.
- 5 Among the most famous Egyptian adaptations is that of Molière's *Tartuffe* by Uthman Jalal (*Al-Shaykh Matluf* [circa 1870]), a full transposition of the play into an Arabo-Islamic context.
- 6 Among Manfaluti's most successful adaptations is that of Paul et Virginie by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (*Al-Fadila*, first published in 1923), maybe because it was received as a Western echo of traditional Arabic courtly romances such as *Majnun Layla*. Another such case is that of the 'arabization' of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* by the poet Hafiz Ibrahim (1872-1932) under the title *al-Bu'asa'*, first published in 1909 and often republished (the last time in 1971). Although the Arabic title is a clear translation of the French one, we are told in the entry 'Hafiz Ibrahim' in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* that 'Hafiz's true talent may have been in prose, as can be seen from his unfinished work *al-Bu'asa'* (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1980 edition, Micropedia, IV: 832).
- 7 Sha'ban Abdel Aziz Khalifa, 'Trente années d'édition égyptienne,' *Bulletin du*

- CEDEJ, 25 (1989): 30-1. Statistics on book production vary considerably according to how a 'book' is defined. Thus, the figures cited here should be taken as indicating plausible rough estimates rather than definitive numbers.
- 8 See our bibliography, *Traductions arabes d'auteurs d'expression française: Bibliographie - Égypte, 1952-1989* (Cairo: Service culturel de l'Ambassade de France en Égypte, 1990), Travaux et recherches, 1.
  - 9 With the passing of time, it seems quite paradoxical that the public intervention in the 1960s is largely responsible for the collapse of the Egyptian publishing industry in the years between 1967 and 1975, and, furthermore, that the low profile adopted by the state in cultural matters under the 'open-door policy' (*Infitah*) actually initiated the publishing industry's recovery by freeing it from its constraints and allowing foreign investment. Cf. Yves Gonzalez-Quijano, 'Politiques culturelles et industrie du livre en Égypte,' *Maghreb-Machrek*, 127 (1990): 104-20.
  - 10 Cf. Sayyid Al-Bahravi, 'Le public de la littérature, un domaine à étudier,' *Bulletin du CEDEJ*, 25 (1989): 177-85.
  - 11 Despite the decrease of direct French influence under the British occupation of Egypt (1882-1952), French linguistic and cultural influence remained strong enough to result in the emergence of an important Egyptian-Francophone production, especially among the Christian and Jewish minorities. However, this production fell abruptly after 1956 and was then limited to a handful of writers and intellectuals who emigrated to France in the 1950s.
  - 12 *Le Monde Arabe dans la vie intellectuelle et culturelle en France: Colloque, 18-20 janvier 1988* (Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 1989).
  - 13 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978).
  - 14 Naguib Mahfouz, *Le Jour de l'assassinat du leader* (Paris: Sindbad, 1989). All English translations are mine.
  - 15 Badr Chaker Al-Sayyab, *Le Golfe et le fleuve* (Paris: Sindbad, 1977), p. 89. It is a tradition still respected today by Arab poets to treat the beloved woman as male in elegiac poetry. This is the only way I can explain Miquel's mistake, since the whole poem is obviously an elegy to a woman, designated at the end as 'Iqbâl' and earlier as 'Umm Ghaylân,' Mother of Ghaylan, according to the Arabic habit of addressing adult women by the name of their first child. Moreover, Miquel himself explains, in a final footnote, that this poem 'was composed in Kuwait Hospital and is said to be his last one,' which makes the poem - and the mistake - all the more pathetic. I am grateful to Professor Ferial Ghazoul of the American University in Cairo for bringing this example to my attention.
  - 16 Nada Tomiche, *La Littérature arabe traduite. Mythes et réalités* (Paris: Geuthner, 1978), p. 3. As I write these lines (May 1991), the latest French translation of *Mille et une nuits* (by Jamal Eddine Bencheikh and André Miquel) is being published in Gallimard's prestigious collection *La Pléiade*, making it the first Arabic translation to be included in the French literary canon - another indication, if necessary, of the centrality of *The Arabian Nights* in Arabic literature as represented by French culture.
  - 17 Taha Hussein, *Le Livre des jours*, trans. Jean Lecerf and Gaston Wiet (1947; rpt. Paris: Gallimard, 1973).
  - 18 Tawfik El-Hakim, *Un substitut de campagne en Égypte*, trans. Gaston Wiet and Zaki M. Hassan (1938; rpt. Paris: Plon, 1974).
  - 19 Tomiche, *La Littérature arabe traduite*, p. 21.
  - 20 It is noteworthy that the first English publisher to invest in modern Arabic literature in translation (Heinemann Educational Books) was also primarily

oriented towards the overseas markets of Africa and the Middle East. Translation of Arabic literature into Western languages actually began as a South-South exchange (with the mediation of English and French working as *linguae francae* in a European publishing structure), rather than as a real North-South exchange.

- 21 Ten of his books are now available in French, and his *Trilogy* is the first modern Arabic novel to be republished in a paperback edition in France.
- 22 On modern Arabic literature in English translation, see Edward Said, 'Embargoed Literature,' *The Nation*, 17 September 1990, pp. 278-80.
- 23 Fouad Zakariya, *Islamisme ou laïcité. Les Arabes à l'heure du choix* (Paris: La Découverte, and Cairo: Al-Fikr, 1991).
- 24 Zakariya's book was most often presented as an 'unexpected contribution in the midst of the breaking wave of fundamentalist Islam' (André Laurens, *Le Monde*, 10-11 February 1991), which 'may help some non-Arabists to realize that rationalism has not completely drowned in the wave of political militancy that has swept through the world of Islam' (*The Economist*, 6 April 1991). In these reviews, Zakariya appeared as the exception which proves the rule, the good, modern Arab in the midst of backwardness. With rare exceptions, such as Jacques Berque ('Refuser la tentation de l'insularité,' *Le Monde diplomatique*, March 1991, p. 13), the reviewers failed to consider the conditions which made it possible for Zakariya to develop his reflection from within the Arabo-Islamic world.
- 25 Gamal Ghitany, 'Zayni Barakat: vue de l'autre rive,' in *La Littérature égyptienne traduite en français*, ed. Edouard Al-Kharrat, Richard Jacquemond, Anne Wade Minkowski, and Hoda Wasfi (Arles: Actes Sud, 1991).
- 26 See Hassan Hanafi, *Madkhal 'ila 'ilm al-istighrab* (Cairo: Madbuli, 1991). French translation to be published in 1992 (Paris: La Découverte).

# THE LANGUAGE OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE: FIGURES OF ALTERITY IN CANADIAN TRANSLATION

*Sherry Simon*

In the mythologies of modern nations, one particular dimension of cultural identity seems to take on overwhelming importance in defining difference. Few would dispute that the strong explanatory powers given to class in Great Britain or race in the United States are given in Canada to language.

In fact, cultural difference in Canada has been defined almost exclusively in terms of language for most of its history. Though the history of Canada starts, of course, with its native peoples and proceeds through the voyages of exploration to the colonization of New France, the real beginning of the modern Canadian state is inevitably traced to that fateful battle on the Plains of Abraham which saw New France pass to British rule in 1763. For more than two centuries the political, economic and cultural life of Canada has been accounted for in terms of the essential duality of its 'founding peoples.' While the differences between English and French Canadians included differences in ethnicity, religion and social class, language has been persistently maintained as the essential sign of difference between the two groups.

As the operation whose mandate it is to negotiate the cultural differences which are embodied by language, translation takes on more than trivial importance in such a context. This importance is expressed materially by the imposing economic infrastructure which was created by successive federal governments and which supports a discreet and powerful translation machine essential to the well-oiled functioning of the bilingual administration. Symbolically, translation comes to be the very representation of the play of equivalence and difference in cultural interchange: translation permits communication without eliminating the grounds of specificity.

It would be wrong, however, to imagine that translation has remained an unmoving icon of peaceful coexistence in the history of English-French relations in Canada. In fact, the discourse on translation, as well

as its various practices, reveals radically new configurations as they are distanced from official political exigencies and as they are placed in specific historical contexts. But it is not only these sociopolitical dimensions which have made translation an increasingly powerful figure for understanding operations of cultural transmission and interchange. Poststructuralist paradigms of communication have made translation a figure of dramatic indeterminacy, invested less with a confident mission of mediation than with the power to reveal the aporia of communication and the irremediable distance between language and the world of reference. At the same time, however, the inevitable displacements and non-equivalencies of translation have come to represent modes of creation, mechanisms for engendering new meanings and forms. This conceptual recasting has given new importance to translation as a site for investigating the interaction among language, literary form, and social discourse.

This essay will investigate the way in which translation embodies paradigms of cultural difference. This theme has been the overwhelming concern of translation from French to English over the last century and a half and has endowed the task of the Canadian translator with a strong collective dimension. I propose to isolate a number of moments in Canadian translation which can be seen as guided by differing conceptions of cultural difference and its relation to language. These moments (the classic translations of novels by Sir Charles G. D. Roberts and by William Hume Blake at the turn of the century; the translations of the *joual* dialect in the Quebec novel of the 1960s; translation and experimental fiction in the 1980s and 1990s) are not intended as markers in a continuous historical advance. They are constructions whose role is to expose the way translation strategy must negotiate between the ideological demands of social discourse and the exigencies of literary language.

In order to cover some preliminary ground, let me advance some general postulates:

(1) To study translation in a national context is to become aware of the multiplicity of intersecting functions and discourses in which it participates. The humanist vision of translation as peaceful dialogue among equals, as the egalitarian pursuit of mutual comprehension, is only one of a number of paradigms which account for the dynamics of translation. If translation is taking on increased importance today as a way to conceptualize processes of cultural transmission, it is because we recognize that it participates in many different ways in the generation of new forms of knowledge, new textual forms, new relationships to language.

The Canadian context allows us to understand the dissymmetries, the relations of dominance, which create cultural meanings attached to translation. Translation does not carry the same meaning for Quebec and for English Canada. Historically, prefaces to translations of French-

Canadian literature into English tend to underscore the humanistic functions of translation, insisting on the political desirability of increased comprehension between the peoples of Canada. The discourse on translation in Quebec has tended to be concerned with the importance of keeping the French language free of the interferences caused by massive translation from English to French. Translation has been a much more highly charged and sensitive issue in Quebec – if only because of the very different historical experience of the French language in North America.

(2) At the same time, it is important to distinguish between translation as *remplacement* and translation as *supplément*. In the first case, a translation is undertaken for reasons of legal or commercial constraint to stand in the place of a previously existing text. This is the case of the overwhelming majority of translations undertaken in Canada, largely as a legal obligation. In the second case, translation is optional and seeks to integrate the alterity of the text into the receiving culture, to expand its repertoire.

(3) One might expect that the modes of authorization which sustain translation would differ according to the functions and contexts of the translation process. Like any process of rewriting (and ultimately of writing itself), translation is grounded in complex modes of authorization. At the most general level of constraints, we might identify, with Michel Charles, two basic types of textual authority which command mechanisms of transmission, two ways in which new texts are created out of old ones. He calls them 'commentary' and 'rhetoric.' In the first case, texts are unchangeable monuments which are to be maintained and respected (as they were for the Scholastics); in the second, they serve as generators of new discourses (as they were for writers and translators in the French classical period).<sup>2</sup> Charles reads the history of Western literature (or more precisely of attitudes towards the literary text) as a movement between these two modes. Historical changes in translation practices can also be usefully understood as participating in these broad trans-discursive shifts; the work of translation is framed by the authority given to certain texts to generate specific kinds of rewriting processes.

But our understanding of authorization, as Antoine Berman has so pointedly argued ('La Traduction de la lettre'), must also include ethical parameters. Translation is not only the appropriation of previously existing texts in a mode of vertical succession; it is the materialization of our relationship to otherness, to the experience – through language – of what is different. While the way in which alterity and strangeness are respected in translation has much to do with the historical and institutional norms which have come to dominate national traditions, these norms are not eternal – as Berman argues in regard to the French tradition. Using a theoretical framework largely based on the thought and practice

of the German Romantics, he insists on the importance of the individual and collective ethical dimensions of the translation process.

In the Canadian experience, for the historical and socio-cultural reasons that have been mentioned, the ethical dimensions of translation are anything but accessory. Translation brings into play concepts of cultural difference which result in the construction of implicit (sometimes explicit) relations of alterity through language. These relationships are far from static and come to materialize the changing values with which language is invested. What we would like to investigate here, then, are the paradigms of cultural difference which have guided the translation of some literary works from French to English in Canada<sup>3</sup> and which have therefore been the basis of an implicit ethic of translation.

### THE EVIDENCE OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

To return to the literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is to plunge into a time when cultural difference was not so much a problem as a given – a tangible and unquestioned fact of collective reality. The 'French' and the 'English' were irremediably different, one from the other; in these differences seemed to speak the nature of human difference. We recognize now that conceptions of cultural difference all through Canadian history were shaped by a kind of internal colonialism, which made the officially equal union of ten provinces (in fact nine until the entry of Newfoundland in 1949) seem to Quebec much more like the empire of one Canada over the other. Although the 'English' (in fact, the British) never constituted one unified ethnic group and the 'French' (French-Canadians) were themselves divided by relations of class, the overwhelming cultural, religious, and economic differences between the two groups were most often understood in terms of an unequal, dual relationship – the British being at all times dominant.

Such is the context in which the first two important English translations were undertaken in Canada: Charles G. D. Roberts' version of Philippe Aubert de Gaspé's *Les Anciens canadiens* in 1890 and William Hume Blake's version of Louis Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine* in 1921. Both translators were writers who admired the values of French Canada – Roberts, an extraordinarily prolific poet and popular author of animal stories; Blake, a lawyer who took to penning reflective essays on wilderness experiences. Both were writers who used their translations to promote both the literature and the social values of French Canada to their presumably more skeptical English-Canadian readers.

We know of the Francophile attitudes of both through their writing and particularly through the prefaces they wrote for their respective translations. Roberts uses his preface to proclaim the irrevocably dual

nature of Canadian literature, its two separate and parallel streams. At the same time, he insists on the value of translation as a vehicle for knowledge of the other literature and of its people. 'We of English speech turn naturally to French-Canadian literature for knowledge of the French-Canadian people' (Roberts, 1890). So is inaugurated a paradigm which sees knowledge of literature as a privileged means of access to socio-historical reality. The terms of this paradigm will persist to the present.

Blake is less concerned with the political realm: his interest lies with valorizing the specific cultural and spiritual values of French Canada. Here begins another motif of intercultural translation: the attitude of sympathy and attraction necessary for effective translation. The various editions of Blake's *Maria Chapdelaine* contain prefaces by Blake and by his publisher Hugh Eayrs which all combine to affirm Blake's particular competence for this translation: his knowledge of the specific vernaculars, his intimacy with French-Canadian values, the respect with which Blake himself was held by the country-people.

There was no one in Canada quite so equipped to do it. Blake knew and loved French Canada and its people and they loved him. He was a familiar figure for many years at Pointe au Pic. . . . He was anxious that English-speaking Canada first, and after that the world, should have this picture of the Province which was his second home.

(Eayrs, in Blake, 1938)

That Blake's translations are an extension of his elegant propagandizing in favor of the nobility and archaic virtues of French Canada is clear in numerous remarks in his prefaces, including the classic liberal formulation:

How many of our petty differences rest in sheer incomprehension, and vanish upon that closer acquaintance which it is at once a pleasure and a duty to cultivate! There is no surer guide-book to the ways and manners of Quebec than *Chez Nous*, for the author delves beneath the surface and lays bare to us the generous and kindly French-Canadian heart.

(Blake, 1924, p. 16)

To read Blake's essays on hunting and fishing in the wild, on the superior virtues and courtesies of his French-Canadian guides and hosts, is to plunge into a genteel and paternalistic universe. Pointe au Pic and the Charlevoix region of Quebec were favored resort areas for the English; but Blake was not after social frivolity. He complains that the building of a train line will destroy the peace of the area (Blake, 1915). It is quite astonishing that as late as 1948, Lord Tweedsmuir, in his preface to a re-edition of Blake's fishing essays, *Brown Waters*, could still evoke this



pastoral vision of French Canada. Tweedsmuir compares Blake's essays to the charm of Isaak Walton who 'sets his simple angling adventures against the background of English pastoral milkmaids singing in the meadows, and country inns scented with lavender, and the busy capitol only just across Tottenham Hill' (Blake, 1948). Blake too leads us not only into the natural life of rivers and lakes, but also into the 'company of the countryfolk, a rich idiomatic life which is one of Canada's chief possessions. He interprets nature to man and the two races to each other.'

The perhaps surprising conjunction in the last sentence between 'nature' and 'the races' makes perfect sense in the world of W. H. Blake, where the French-Canadian is understood to enjoy superior knowledge of the rural and natural realms. Blake insists especially on the spiritual valor of French Canada: 'Approach Quebec with a tolerant and unbigoted mind; you need not journey far to discover the living principle that animates any religion worth having' (Blake, 1915, p. 140). 'Our scale of more complex rations gives discords that are not so easily resolved, and it is hard for us to understand how rapid and how sure are the responses of those who still vibrate to the simple harmonies of life' (*ibid.*, p. 144).

### TRANSLATING THE ABSOLUTES OF DIFFERENCE

Such then are the well-defined continents of cultural difference which Roberts' and Blake's translations take upon themselves to negotiate. The principal thrust of translation strategy in both cases is in the direction of what Antoine Berman calls hypertextuality: the careful tailoring of the translation to writerly canons ('La Traduction de la lettre'). Neither seeks to inscribe the 'difference' of the literature (and the culture) they are translating through rupture with the models of esthetic completion. On the contrary, both devote much care and considerable writerly skill to turning their books into inspired works of prose that conform superbly to the norms of the receiving culture.

Roberts shows no qualms at all in quite gaily anglicizing a great deal of the content of *Les Anciens canadiens*, a historical novel which recounts the events following the conquest of French Canada in 1763. His translation can be considered the first real success of literary translation into English. The book carries Roberts' signature in more ways than one. By a curious and unusual inversion, his name appears on the title page of a classic Canadian edition, de Gaspé's appearing only on the inside. The translation also bears the translator's imprint in being a carefully wrought work of English-Canadian literature. Roberts emphasizes that he has chosen to treat the book as a work of literature and not as a document. He chooses therefore to eliminate the documentary material appended to the original, informing the reader in the preface that he has done so. French songs and poems are given English form and content;

François becomes Francis, idiomatic expressions are often drawn from the banter of British schoolboys. The occasional mixing of 'ha'pennies' with 'francs' doesn't seem to bother him. The predominating ethnocentricity of the translation seems confirmed by the change of title in the 1905 version from *Canadians of Old* to the astonishingly Scottish *Cameron of Lochiel*.

Faced with a work of historical fiction whose dimensions either as 'romance' or as 'history' could have been emphasized, Roberts opts for the former. In this he is consistent with his stated goal: to prove the existence of French-Canadian literature. His very accomplished translation indeed earned for this work an important place in the Canadian canon. The appearance in 1929 of a new translation, entitled *Seigneur d'Haberville* and containing extensive *historical* notes, indicates the kind of interpretation of de Gaspé's novel which Roberts chose not to provide.

The specific qualities of W. H. Blake's translation of *Maria Chapdelaine* also become evident as they are contrasted with a competing version published by Andrew Macphail in the same year.<sup>4</sup> Macphail's translation, like Blake's, reflected his 'deep commitment to a rural and traditional way of life and [his] sentimental admiration for French Canada' (*The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*). We are now aware that this topos of admiration for French Canada is a firmly established element of nineteenth-century English Canadian literary life: French Canada signifies for English Canada a *fidelity* to history and language which is absent from Anglo-Saxon Canada. But while Macphail's admiration results in a painfully literal rendition of the text, Blake's is expressed in a breathtakingly liberal approach to sentence construction. Consider some of the following phrases from Blake: 'Toute cette blancheur froide' becomes 'The chill and universal white'; 'C'était le bois qui venait jusqu'à la berge' is translated 'It was always forest'; 'Une succession de descentes et de montées guère plus profondes que le profil d'une houle de mer haute' becomes 'a succession of ups and downs scarcely more considerable than the slopes of an ocean swell, from trough to crest, from crest to trough'; 'sur le sol canadien' is translated 'under the Canadian skies.'

Blake consistently introduces in vocabulary or in syntax an intensification of the evocative qualities of the original. His own fondness for the combination of a metaphysical theme teased out of humble and mundane circumstances is given full expression in this translation.

'Make land!' Rude phrase of the country, summing up in two words all the heart-breaking labour that transforms the incult woods, barren of sustenance, to smiling fields, ploughed and sown. Samuel Chapdelaine's eyes flamed with enthusiasm and determination as he spoke.

(Blake, 1921, p. 46)

The particular genius of Blake's manner is sentence rhythm. Without losing the elements of each sentence, he rearticulates it so as to increase its rhetorical effectiveness to express serenity, anguish or fear. Two passages from a particularly dramatic chapter following the death of Maria's fiancé François Paradis are good illustrations:

Une main s'était glissée dans sa gorge, l'étouffant, dès que le dénouement du récit tragique était devenu clair pour elle.

(Hémon, p. 130)

A hand had fastened upon her throat, stifling her, as the narrative unfolded and the inevitable end came within her view.

(Blake, 1921, p. 154)

Vu du seuil, le monde figé dans son sommeil blanc semblait plein d'une grande sérénité; mais dès que Maria fut hors de l'abri des murs, le froid descendit sur elle comme un couperet, et la lisière lointaine du bois se rapprocha soudain, sombre façade derrière laquelle cent secrets tragiques, enfouis, appelaient et se lamentaient comme des voix.

(Hémon, p. 131)

The world that lay beyond the threshold, sunk in moveless white repose, was of an immense serenity; but when Maria passed from the sheltering walls the cold smote her like the hungry blade of a sword and the forest leaped toward her in menace, its inscrutable face concealing a hundred dreadful secrets which called aloud to her in lamentable voices.

(Blake, 1921, p. 155)

Here Blake does not hesitate to play up the melodrama in Hémon's novel. In the first example, 's'était glissé' has been intensified to 'fastened,' 'dénouement' to 'inevitable end.' In the second, the changes are more radical. 'Figé dans son sommeil blanc' has become 'sunk in moveless white repose' and 'Vu du seuil, le monde' has been inverted so that 'The world that lay beyond the threshold' presents itself to view in a less timid, more grandly affirmative fashion. Additional melodrama is almost cinematographically added in the next sentences as 'descendit' becomes 'smote' and 'couperet' is anthropomorphized as 'the hungry blade of a sword.' The forest which Hémon had made to move forward suddenly ('se rapprocha soudain') now 'leaped toward her in menace,' showing not a 'sombre façade,' but an 'inscrutable face.'

Despite Blake's constant effort to make Hémon's language speak as vividly as possible, the world of his translation remains a distant one. Blake's efforts do not go in the direction of creating a closer and more

easily assimilable text. His use of greetings and names evokes a world in which people speak one to the other with respectful distance. He gives to the characters a language of dignity, always ceremonious, which confers on the whole text an aura of reverence. He also keeps the English reader distant from this world by using archaic modes ('she saw them not'), by using unfamiliar or invented words with French resonance ('moveless,' 'incult,' 'essayed'), by leaving the characters' names in French (even the dog remains 'Chien'), and by leaving the few bits of poetry and song in French. In Blake's translation, much more than in Roberts', we are in a world clearly marked as different.

### 'SPEAK THAT I MIGHT KNOW THEE'

The history of the representation of spoken language in literature has yet to be written. The importance of making class or ethnic difference manifest in the very fabric of language is not always accorded the same urgency. It is in Sir Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*, the novel after which *Les Anciens canadiens* is modelled, that the narrator begins:

The ancient philosopher . . . was wont to say, 'Speak that I may know thee'; and how is it possible for an author to introduce his personae dramatis to his readers in a more interesting and effectual manner than by the dialogue in which each is represented as supporting his own appropriate character?

One of the specially interesting aspects of both Blake's and Macphail's translations is their handling of some of the dialogues. We find in both versions bits of dialogue which are simply calques of the French:

'Well Mr. Larouche, do things go pretty well across the water?' 'Not badly, my lads, not badly' . . . 'It was the Demon of disobedience lured me into that. Beyond doubt it was he.'

'Eh bien, monsieur Larouche, ça marche-t-il toujours de l'autre bord de l'eau?'

'Pas pire, les jeunesses. Pas pire!' . . . 'Le démon de la désobéissance m'a fait ça. C'est lui, certain!'

(Blake, 1921, pp. 13, 40; Hémon, pp. 12, 35)

In some of Blake's own stories, the distance of French-Canadian values is represented through similarly 'calqued' language. 'One bullet hole, assuredly, yes only one, but *not* from the first rifle. How disappointing that *Monsieur* should have nothing but misses to remember; better so, - but it is sacredly amusing' ('sacredly amusing' from 'en sacrament' [Blake, 1915, p. 146]). Or 'His driver bids him to regard well' (from the French: 'regardez bien' [ibid., p.153]). Blake takes great pleasure in miming the figures of French, in overlaying his English with the surface patterns of otherness. We are reminded that Blake professed special

regard for the way French-Canadians used their language, contrary to general opinion (within and without Quebec) which dismissed Quebec French as patois, or jargon. (In his conservative way, Blake will argue that illiteracy is a great preserver of language while 'semi-literacy is its great destroyer' [1915].) He always therefore has his French-Canadian characters speak with elegance and irony, sometimes using the overlay of (Englished) French expressions for emphasis.

Blake's concern for the accuracy of the representation of the vernacular is apparent in his preface to Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine* (added to the 1948 edition for the first time) and in his preface to his less-known translation of a work with fewer obvious literary qualities, Adjutor Rivard's sentimental sketches, *Chez Nous*. In the first case, Blake criticizes Hémon for not having been as precise as he could have been in representing the vernacular of rural Quebec. Hémon, he explains, chose a middle course in the depiction of the peasant language. He 'did not think it wise to put the undiluted dialect into the mouths of his peasant-folk,' thinking surely that this language would not be understood by many. Hémon uses spelling and rhythm to denote some particularities of the language, while he neglects others. Blake points out and corrects Hémon's errors, all the same justifying his poetic right to selective representation.

In his second preface, Blake praises Rivard, in contrast, for having 'made it a labour of love to seek out and embody in his graceful prose those forceful old words which ring so musically and "mean just what they say"' (1924, p. 15). These serene sketches of rural life with their evocation of the old days clearly appealed to Blake. His translation strategy is similar to that used in *Maria Chapdelaine*; here again he frequently prefers archaisms to markers of geographical dialect as a means of connoting strangeness. 'Hearken to me . . . Over there to the sou'-west lives François le Terrien' (ibid., p. 117).

## HISTORICIZING REPRESENTATIONS OF ALTERITY

Blake's relatively tame experiments with the representation of French-Canadian speech in English are nevertheless an important moment in what we could constitute as a history of the linguistic representations of alterity. His work is to be seen in a context which looks back to the work of the dialect poets of the early century, while it looks forward to the various innovations and controversies which will mark the use of the *joual* dialect in the Quebec novel, the bilingual poetic experiments of the Montreal Jewish poet Abraham Moses Klein, and the self-conscious formalism of the 'new writing' of the 1970s. In each case, writers and translators show excessive sensitivity to the way language comes to *embody* cultural difference. In order to show how cultural realities are

tied to the code in which they are expressed, writers and translators will experiment with a variety of devices: linguistic overlay, plurilingual cohabitation, cultural hybridity of various kinds. This language work is widely different in nature and intention, of course; there are few similarities between the modernist intentions of Klein's bilingual poems (heavily influenced by Joyce) and the strictly representational, populist and comic poetry of W. H. Drummond. Klein, for instance, uses an excessively gallicized English to evoke Montreal - 'O city metropole, isle riverain! / Your ancient pavages and sainted routs / Traverse my spirit's conjured avenues! / Splendor erabic of your promenades / Foliates there, and there your maisonry / Of pendent balcon and escalier'd march, / Unique midst English habitat, / Is vivid Normandy!' - just as in his novel *The Second Scroll* he adopts the rhythms of French, Hebrew or Yiddish to his text as the context demands. The very porousness of Klein's English suggests both the absence of a single-language community and the possibility of an idealized world of interlingual communication. The parodic accents and broken English of Drummond's poetry deal not with cultural references but with speech, providing a new variation in the depiction of 'cultural types.' These poems are for us today the perfect expression of colonialist paternalism.

Drummond became wildly popular in English Canada as the author of the 'Habitant' poems which present endearing comic portraits of French-Canadian 'types.' It was poetry meant to be recited and its major interest resided in the phoneticization of French-Canadian broken English.

Venez ici, mon cher ami, an' sit down by me - so  
An' I will tole you story of old tam' long ago -  
W'en ev'ryt'ing is happy - w'en all de bird is sing  
An' me - I'm young an' strong lak' moose  
an' not afraid no t'ing.

(*'Le Vieux Temps'*)

Even at the time of its publication, Drummond was aware of the potentially offensive nature of this material, but there seems to have been no outcry. On the contrary, esteemed French-Canadian 'poet laureate' Louis Fréchette wrote an extremely flattering introduction to Drummond's *The Habitant and Other French-Canadian Poems*. And the book received a 'response' entitled *Petite histoire des grandes rois de Angleterre* by Ephrem Choinard. It is a spoof on the English relationship to the monarchy, written in an anglicized French full of spelling and grammar mistakes:

Victoria fut si tant bonne  
Et se tant se fit respecter

Que mon cœur de joie il frissonne  
 Quand je me vois pour le chanter.  
 Sa règne eut oun tel maggnitude  
 Que, pour en bien suivre la cours  
 Dans oun véridique étude,  
 Les vers de huit pieds sont trop courts.

This response in kind seems to indicate that Drummond's poems were considered well within the limits of correct literary behavior.

Drummond's poems join with Blake's much more genteel efforts in giving life to a topos of French-English literary relations: the identity of French-Canadians is above all to be discovered in the way they speak. An entirely new dramatization of this question appeared in the 1960s and 1970s with the introduction of *joual* or urban working-class French as a feature of contemporary writing. As well as being a source of controversy within the Quebec milieu, the question of the methods and ethics of its translation was particularly difficult – especially in the context of the explicit political tensions which informed so much of the cultural activity of the period.

### ***JOUAL: ATTACKING THE CULTURAL BODY***

Though potentially a rather unremarkable phenomenon in other national and literary contexts, the irruption of urban working-class French into the literary world of theater, and then the novel, in the Quebec of the late 1960s brought with it a host of explosive political, literary, linguistic issues. For the purists adopting Parisian written French as their model, *joual* was an impure and degraded form of speech, its pronunciation vulgar, its grammar incorrect, its rampant anglicisms an affront. For those who were articulating a philosophy of cultural anticolonialism in Quebec, *joual* was to become a kind of perverse badge of honour which was to flaunt Quebec's alienation. For some an expression of authenticity, for others a weapon in the forcing of cultural barriers, *joual* has enjoyed since the 1960s a long life of controversy, in fact far exceeding its artistic importance. The longevity of the debate over *joual*, however, is to be explained by the overwhelming issues of cultural legitimacy which it seemed to incarnate. While cultural analysts and linguists today largely agree that *joual* (or, more recently, 'la langue québécoise') cannot be defined as a language, that the abundance of phonetic markers on the page no longer really represents a threat to established order, it remains true that during the 1960s and 1970s, the presence of *joual*, of the marks of orality and popular language, in the theatre and in the novel were crucial. This importance can be characterized as a moment of appropriation, of the 'de-colonization of language' often described today as 'post-

colonial' writing, but which in this case is better understood as 'anti-colonial' (see Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, pp. 38-77).

The *cultural specificity* of Quebec literature in the 1960s and 1970s was therefore persistently brought back to the *specificity of language*. Translating the transgressive intentions of this language, however, presented a rather complex challenge. For one thing, one could almost say that untranslatability was inscribed in it through the very presence of English words. What would be the ethics of rerouting those English words back to a totally English context?

A number of Canadian translators and analysts have reflected on some of the ways the issues were handled (Mezei, Bednarski, Homel, Ellenwood). Generally speaking, most agree that *joual* is a representation of a conflictual situation, one which expresses a situation of dominance and transgression. Despite the very different esthetic aims to which this orally-marked language is directed (and there is no question but that the novels and stories of Jacques Ferron, Jacques Renaud, Jacques Godbout or Victor Lévy-Beaulieu differ one from the other in absolutely essential ways), the presence of English within the French text is inevitably interpreted as more than a simple transcription of popular language: it points to a complex mixture of domination and appropriation which gives a clear political coloring to its use. In a finely argued discussion, Betty Bednarski shows how in Ferron's use of gallicized English words ('les Stêtes, le Farouest, Edmontonne, le Tchiffe, Biouti Rose; néveurmagne, Lorde Djisusse, huré, bines, biseness, clergimane, cuiquelounche, ouiquène,' etc.) there is a constituent ambiguity. The English words aggress the French text, but their careful gallicization presents something of a movement of revenge. These words are not attempts to 'represent' popular language, as they are in the work of Jacques Renaud, for instance. Jacques Renaud's mixture of anglicisms, phoneticized language and slurrings were intended to render the street-language of French-speaking Montrealers. 'Je l'ai pitché dehors . . . La chienne! J'voudrais qu'a soye pus r'gardable . . . que pas personne mette la patte dessus . . . Excepté moé . . . Moé! Rien qu'moé! crissel' (*Le Cassé*, p. 43). In Ferron, the line dividing narration from dialogue is very thin, and there is a more visual than aural intention in his idiosyncratic spellings. Bednarski makes clear that understanding the various dimensions of the meaning of *joual* in the work of Jacques Ferron, for example, does not necessarily lead to a satisfactory or definitive translation solution. In fact, she confesses to dissatisfaction with her own previous handling of the problems. She explains how the 'victory' of French over English in Ferron's work (the presence of a certain number of English words given French pronunciation and spelling, like 'cuiquelounche') is in some sense reversed by the 'betrayal' which is the translator's appropriation of the space between author and public. This



space is defined not only by the personal considerations of the translator, but by editorial norms imposed by publishers.

It would be wrong, however, to suppose that the original text lives in unadulterated complicity with its first public and that the new presence of the translator upsets this pristine harmony. The translator's position would be untenable, argues Bednarski, if there were not at the very heart of the work itself an affirmation of its own otherness, its own estrangement from itself, from its author, from its readers. The translator does not waylay the text, deliver it whimpering into the hands of the English enemy. Translation becomes another aspect of the work's internal contradictions.

Translators do not often get or take the opportunity to explain, as Bednarski has done, the complex pull of affiliations which obtain between translator and text – especially as it operates in a politically charged context. In fact, the transgressive use of English in French texts has been tamed in much English-Canadian translation. As Kathy Mezei concludes, 'finding certain problematic elements (e.g. *joual*) culturally untranslatable, [the translators] have deferred to the target text. . . . The Quebec text becomes assimilated into English-Canadian literature' (p. 20).

The general dissatisfaction with the results of translating *joual* is somewhat inevitable. If literary language is a sacred body incarnating the cultural specificity of its speakers (as the literary use of *joual* aimed to be), then translation is doomed to partial failure. As the reflection of a particularly tense period in Canadian political history (the late 1960s and early 1970s), in which political issues were cast first and foremost as language issues, the translation of novels which carried specific linguistic-cultural markers could not be executed without signal difficulties. This particular crystallization of difference in language, however, turned out to be yet another episode in the continuing effort of Quebec literature to express new kinds of cultural realities through language. The aggressive clash of alterities represented in the various literary idioms known as *joual* must, in fact, remain a problem for translation. Such was its intention and its meaning.

### THE BODY FRAGMENTED

Canadian translation, as we have seen, puts into specific sociohistorical context themes of language and alterity which have informed language theory at least since the German Romantics (Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*). How does language itself come to represent the uncertain spaces of cultural difference, the issues of power and dominance which inform all cultural representations? Bakhtin made this question the basis of his theory of literary representation; the great novelists of high

modernism, Joyce, Beckett, Nabokov, inscribed modernist paradigms of exile and marginality within its framework. Now, postcolonial writing (in terms very similar to those first applied to feminist writing) is increasingly defined in terms of its 'abrogation' or 'appropriation' of language paradigms issued from the metropolitan center, as writing in which language variance is a privileged metonymic figure for cultural difference (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, p. 52).

Emerging out of a venerable tradition of language theory, this collusion between language and cultural difference does not, however, always tell the same story. Contemporary postmodern suspicions as to the absolutes of individual and collective identities, the congruence between linguistic and national identities, have fostered new paradigms of difference and hybridity. In Quebec fiction in particular such doubts are expressed, for example, in the plurilingualism of some contemporary novels (the blending of Italian and French in Daniel Gagnon's *Venite a Cantare*) and in the use of translation as a theme for expressing new configurations of cultural space. The novel which perhaps expresses the most complex and fruitful development of this theme is Nicole Brossard's *Le Désert mauve*, first published in 1988 and translated as *Mauve Desert* in 1990. The book is divided into three parts: the first, 'Mauve Desert,' is an elemental tale of passion and destruction in the desert – a man (representing science and power) kills a woman (who is desire and an obscure threat); the second part, 'A Book to Translate,' contains the comments and reflections of a translator as she goes about preparing to translate this text; the third part, 'Mauve, the Horizon,' translates (from French into French) the initial story. The first and third parts are largely identical except for changes in nuance, intensity, phrasing. Brossard's concern is for the microscopic analysis of the gestures, intensities, moments of strong emotion and patient artisanal moves which make up the work of translation. She is concerned with the network of desire which links the translator to the imagined author and to the characters themselves. But she also draws attention to the differences of site which inform the writing and which will create an inevitable space of difference between the original and translated work: the distance between the translated work and the original will be similar to the difference of intensity between the vivid light of the desert and the more diffuse winter sun which shines further north. It becomes then an extension of the perceptions generated by much feminist writing itself, which imposed a new logic of translation wherein both translator and writer found themselves equally defined as perturbers and rewriters of an already prepared script, as inventors of new subject-positions for themselves and for their readers (see Godard).

*Mauve Desert* uses translation to emphasize the essential distance which lies between subjectivity and language. But, in addition,

Brossard's fragmentation of the literary text, her installation of the figure of the translator *within* the text, suggest images of cultural space which are complex and multiple.

Just as the increased heterogeneity of both English-Canadian and Quebec societies<sup>5</sup> has drastically limited the usefulness of understanding Canada *exclusively* in terms of an English-French dialogue (the new strength of the voices of native peoples has made this abundantly clear), the Canadian literatures must define their models of interaction in terms other than that of a strict alterity. Increasingly traversed by a plurality of codes, Quebec literature participates in the dramas of cultural hybridity and self-doubt which are characteristic of much contemporary writing. These doubts increasingly take the form of the cohabitation within a single text of multiple languages and heterogeneous codes. In this case, translation can no longer be a single and definitive enterprise of cultural transfer. Translation, it turns out, not only negotiates between languages, but comes to inhabit the space of language itself. The many languages of the literary text speak of the fragmentation of language communities and the increasing complexity and heterogeneity of cultural space.

## NOTES

- 1 Various language laws have created the necessity for translation: the Official Language Law of 1969 (Federal), which insists on the availability of all official documents in both languages; the Charter of the French language (Law 101) in Quebec, which made French the only official language in Quebec; and various other rulings, like the Supreme Court judgment obliging the province of Manitoba to provide a French translation of all its laws passed since 1870.
- 2 Charles gives these two models of textual affiliation both a transhistorical and a historical significance. Although both can be used to characterize attitudes towards texts in any period, Charles identifies two historical periods in which each may be said to have enjoyed its moment of paradigmatic dominance: the first was the Middle Ages, with its Scholastic apparatus of interpretation and translation (pp. 125-55); the second was the French classical period, when there was an important blurring of boundaries between original writing and free translation (pp. 185-226). Creative writers and translators were inspired with the same confidence to defy the primacy of classical models - the preface to Racine's *Phèdre*, with its combined appeals to accurate rendering and freedom, for instance, very much echoes the terms of the traditional translator's preface.
- 3 To speak about translations from English to French would be to open an entirely separate discussion. While the French-Canadians have described themselves as a 'people of translators,' the intention of the epithet is necessarily self-congratulatory. It was surely not without some measure of sarcastic irony that the nationalist historian Michel Brunet commented that after the British conquest of New France, a 'new career' became available to the nobility. They could become translators. It is in fact true that from 1794 to

1812 the posts of government translators were occupied by members of the great seigneurial families (see Brunet).

The quantity and type of translation activity in Quebec has historically been quite different from that of the rest of Canada and depends on different cultural and ideological paradigms. For further development of this theme, see Simon.

- 4 The mystery of this simultaneous apparition is explained by the failure of a collaborative project between Blake and his friend Andrew Macphail. Disagreeing on the style of the translation, each decided to go his own way. Blake's translation, first published by Macmillan in Canada, then in New York and London, was so successful that it became 'affectionately thought of as the *Book of the House* of the Macmillan Company of Canada Limited these many years' (Eayrs, in Blake, 1938).
- 5 The failure of the constitutional talks in the spring of 1990 (the failure of the Lake Meech Accord) could be said to signal the emergence of new interpretations of Canada. No longer a dialogue between two easily recognizable linguistic blocks, Canada is now a multiplicity of regions. But Quebec cannot be reduced to the status of simply one out of ten provinces, its historical and cultural reality as a 'distinct, French-speaking' society being essential. Quebec is French-speaking, but pluriethnic, capable of integrating large numbers of new immigrants into its own cultural space.

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# COLORS IN TRANSLATION: BAUDELAIRE AND RIMBAUD

*Tom Conley*

In *Pictorialist Poetics: Poetry and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth Century France*, David Scott shows how French poetry moves from a classical standard of mimesis based on the four tropes of rhetoric to a silent writing exploiting plastic tensions of composition. Poets, he argues, look to the surface of their verse to find a new visual force, and they develop complex interactions of language and image that confuse writing with methods that we generally associate with more recent European and American painting. Sustained and illuminating in its analyses, the work also studies the fortunes of color and prosody by recalling that many of the great poets were artists or art critics, and that they strove to absorb the painter's palette into their language. How this is done remains part of the mystery of the poet's wit. The drive to spatialize language appears to be one of the poet's tactics. At another level, we can add, the same poets produce broad chromatic range when they translate space, line and letteristic form into language capable of moving across different idioms.

Citing Albert Thibaudet, Scott notes that in the nineteenth century criticism and poetry strongly resemble the practice of translation. The way reporters view an exposition and put their impressions of it into words becomes something equivalent to the task of rendering the form of one medium into that of another. 'La critique d'art est une traduction d'une langue dans une autre, de la langue plastique dans la langue littéraire/Art criticism is a translation from one idiom into another, from plastic language into literary language'.<sup>1</sup> Thibaudet's observations can in fact be pushed further. Can we say that it might be inconceivable to think of poetry outside of at least *two* registers of translation? One entails transmutation of non-verbal impressions (of painting, of memory, of moving images or psychic events) into a form that makes them reproducible; the other embodies the same act in and across the verbal texture of its words and articulation of space and print. In this light, poems would originate already in translation, and appear to be written to and from each other, in correspondence, across centuries and languages.

Verse invests into its expression and verbal substance dialogues of

shape and figuration. If, in this volume dedicated to rethinking translation, its art figures prominently in literature and painting over the last two centuries, we must ask how lyric poetry succeeds in putting two modes in movement simultaneously. Working on two levels at once, it offers itself as a tenuous form that operates multifariously, shifting its linguistic matter between vocables, signifiers, and fragments of discourse. Its substance often conflates language into pictural shapes through the mediation of a foreign tongue initially inscribed in the original. The stake of this short essay will be to see, first, how this process works in poetry and then how the plasticity of verbal matter, when followed in its movement of translation, releases chromatic sensation.<sup>2</sup> To do so we shall determine some of the relations that hold between Baudelaire's essays on painting and *Les Fleurs du mal* before comparing his poetics of translation to Rimbaud's writings of 1871.

In his *Salon* of 1859, in the famous introduction to 'Le paysage,' Baudelaire asserts that the spectacle of a landscape is nothing more than what a spectator makes of it through his or her imagination. The remark seems to bode ill for painters who wish to excel in the genre.

Si tel assemblage d'arbres, de montagnes, d'eaux et de maisons, que nous appelons un paysage, est beau, ce n'est pas par lui-même, mais par moi, par une grâce propre, par l'idée ou le sentiment que j'y attache.

If such an assemblage of trees, mountains, waters and houses that we call landscapes is beautiful, it is not by itself, but myself, by my own grace, by the idea or the feeling that I attach to it.<sup>3</sup>

Often taken to represent Baudelaire's investment in our imagination as the supreme faculty of art, in reality the statement thresholds a more specific and telling reflection on the process of translation in a broader context of mediation. The landscape is suffused into the spectator's mind until, in the next sentence, Baudelaire pulls it out of abstraction and thrusts it back into the graphic matter of language:

C'est dire suffisamment, je pense, que tout paysagiste qui ne sait pas traduire un sentiment par un assemblage de matière végétale ou minérale n'est pas un artiste. Je sais bien que l'imagination humaine peut, par un effort singulier, concevoir un instant la nature sans l'homme, et toute la masse suggestive éparpillée dans l'espace, sans un contemplateur pour en extraire la comparaison, la métaphore, ou l'allégorie.

I believe it suffices to say that every landscape artist who does not know how to translate a feeling by an assemblage of vegetal or mineral matter is not an artist. I know quite well that by means of a

magic effort the human imagination can for an instant conceive of nature without man, and all suggestive mass scattered in space, without a contemplating soul to extract comparison, metaphor, or allegory from it.

(p. 660)

The artist is now viewed as an exemplary translator who turns matter into objects of contemplation; to the contrary, the text implies, a viewer can fancy a landscape without the presence of human beings figuring within it. A landscape devoid of *staffage* or other mediating shapes will free the landscape from mimetic control. Without a human agent that serves as an element of a comparison or metaphor, the landscape will be free to invent itself.

Baudelaire appears to place a time-held conception of the artist into a logical impossibility. Because a landscape is *not* made of linguistic material, how can it ever 'translate' a common visual shape into a superior form of ideation? The ultimate absurdity would be that of a painter drawing leaves of trees in the shape of alphabetical letters or numbers. How then can printed language be a code that relates pictures to discourse? The consequence of the observation is that every landscape has to be unconscious (or, if a more recent term can be used, forcibly *réel*), that is, a shape that cannot be mediated by discourse, much less by an human intervention of description or representation. Baudelaire underscores the dilemma by satirizing painters who have recourse to books for inspiration, or who

prennent le dictionnaire de l'art pour l'art même; ils copient un mot de dictionnaire, croyant copier un poème. Or un poème ne se copie jamais: il veut être composé.

mistake a dictionary of art for art itself; believing that they are copying a poem, they copy a word from the dictionary. But a poem is never copied; it needs to be composed.

(p. 661)

Furthermore, artists are fooled when they open a window, believing that the entire space is contained in the rectangle of the frame, when 'trees, sky, and house' acquire for them *la valeur d'un poème tout fait* (the value of a finished poem).

Where in that sentence we expect the word *painting* to fall in its appropriate place, Baudelaire inserts *poem*. The poem is cited in order to become a picture of verbal form, or a self-generated and self-contained translation of abstract shapes. A rhetoric of displacement is used to make the poem become identical to the painting. Baudelaire appears to be announcing the credo of abstract expressionism all the while he alludes to classical notions of the highly pictorial bases assumed to characterize



poetic craft.<sup>4</sup> The critic sets in place a poetics of translation at the threshold of his essay on the landscape. He puts verbal and pictorial arts in a single space by claiming that both artist and poet share a common ground of composition and imagination. Effectively one has to turn his or her creation into the other if a transcending term, a Poem, will become the ultimate product of the two.

This capital moment in 'Le paysage' can help to explain how Baudelaire's art of pictogrammar emerges from his verse through the medium of translation. In other words, the essay shows how Baudelaire bridges a pre-given gap between *pictura* and *poesis* when he translates poetry into picture. A pictographic discourse, that is, a hieroglyph approximating a 'divine' language beyond the reach of common speech, can be glimpsed when various languages fold into each other and become visible in their mixture. Baudelaire appears to project the imagination into landscapes through verbal means that turn poetry into pictures wherever several languages are seen together, and in uncannily perfect simultaneity. In the rest of the essay he casts a stern view upon his contemporaries, upbraiding them for a penchant to develop highly coded allegorical iconographies that amount to 'dictionaries' of synonyms (e.g., tree + field + mountain = landscape), or else for a will to invest a signature or 'style' into what ought not to be man's inscription. Thus Millet's peasants 'sont des pédants qui ont d'eux-mêmes une trop haute opinion / are pedants who bear too high an opinion of themselves' (p. 661). Troyon paints with certitude, therefore with insensitivity. Théodore Rousseau is so inebriated with nature that he mistakes individual studies for total compositions. Corot is not demonic, and often casts the same light on all his subjects. Huet, Jadin, and Clésinger are poetic to a degree, but remain *paysagistes*. Baudelaire caps his observations by noting that most painters suffer from spiritual laziness that makes them merely copy what is before their eyes. The satire leads to a supremely volatile moment in the discourse, when Baudelaire asserts – as if to himself, 'Oui, l'imagination fait le paysage / yes, the imagination makes the landscape' (p. 665). Published in the *Revue française* in 1859, the same sentence is rewritten as 'Oui, l'imagination *fuit* le paysage / yes, the imagination *flees* the landscape.' The remark translates its own movement of attraction and reversion through graphic slippage that suggests to 'make' is to 'move away.' Here the critical discourse becomes the very picture of poetry in its fugacious play of the letter.

The first real *paysagiste* whom Baudelaire extols comes to France over the Atlantic. At the end of the essay he eternises the relatively unknown American painter, George Catlin. None of the French artists has

le charme naturel, si simplement exprimé, des savanes et des prairies de Catlin (je parie qu'ils ne savent même pas ce que c'est Catlin), non

plus que la beauté surnaturelle des paysages de Delacroix, non plus que la magnifique imagination qui coule dans les dessins de Victor Hugo, comme les mystères du ciel.

the natural charm, so simply expressed, of Catlin's prairies and savannahs (I bet that they don't even know what a Catlin is), no more than the supernatural beauty of Delacroix's landscapes, or the magnificent imagination that flows like the mysteries of the heavens in Victor Hugo's drawings.

(p. 668)

Catlin's 'natural' charm is marshalled to counter the laziness and ineptitude of most French masters. But it is the combination of *savanes* and *prairies* that indicates how Baudelaire's eye draws the landscape back into the words. When he bets (*parie*) that people do not know (*savent*) what Catlin does, *prairie* and *savane* are seen filtering through two transparent verbs. 'Prairie' is almost a homophone of its urban opposite, Paris, the site of the cityscapes of *Les Fleurs du mal*.

The substantive recurs at a capital moment in 'Correspondances' as if to lead the reader from a classical landscape of a 'temple of living piers' to one that is more paginal, flat as a *prairie*, and that resembles the great American West. Catlin becomes miraculously suffused with a poetics of synesthesia as the poem unfolds from a declarative stance to a sensuous mix of speech and olfactive impressions. The sonnet moves from a Grecian landscape reminiscent of Poussin (e.g., 'The Death of Phocion') to another of woods, mountains and, strange as it may seem, American prairies of the Tierra del Fuego, Nebraska, Kansas, or Eastern Colorado before slipping into a totally olfactive reverie:

IV

CORRESPONDANCES

La nature est un temple où de vivants piliers  
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;  
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles  
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent  
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité.  
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,  
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.

Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,  
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,  
- Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,

Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies

Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,  
 Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit des sens.<sup>5</sup>

'Correspondances' holds a prominent niche in the French literary pantheon, in the history of Romanticism and Symbolism, and in the relations of literature and philosophy. Instead of reviewing the wealth of interpretations that the sonnet has sustained, for our purposes we ought to see how translation, thematized mysteriously in the first four quatrains, returns to the tenth line as if from an unconscious of Catlin's American landscapes. The sonnet reaches its most intense expression in

Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,

where we scan an almost baroque *alexandrin* that uses visual balance – reminiscent of the diagrammatical style of a Du Bartas or a Sponde – to articulate two hemistiches of almost identical configuration. The six syllables on one side mirror those on the other. 'Doux comme les . . .' is repeated by 'verts comme les . . .,' and their comparatives, *hautbois* and *prairies*, fall at identical points in each respective half of the line. At this point, *prairies* holds a favored place in *Les Fleurs du mal*. It is the only time that the noun is used as a rhyme in the 126 poems of the collection, and its uncharacteristic presence in the *œuvre* in general links it immediately with the description of Catlin published eleven years before, in the *Salon* of 1846, and two years later, in that of 1859. The American landscape seems to project through the word so evanescently that the atmosphere of the New World, which Baudelaire had recently translated through Longfellow and Poe, seems to be invested in pictural associations cued with the inscription of *prairies*. In 'De quelques coloristes,' Baudelaire praises Catlin for the mystery of his colors:

Elle a quelque chose de mystérieux qui me plaît plus que je ne saurais dire. Le rouge, la couleur de sang, la couleur de la vie, abondait tellement dans ce sombre musée, que c'était une ivresse; quant aux paysages, – *montagnes boisées, savanes immenses, rivières désertes*, – ils étaient *monotonement, éternellement verts*; le rouge, cette couleur si obscure, si épaisse, plus difficile à pénétrer que les yeux d'un serpent, – le vert, cette couleur calme et gaie et souriante de la nature, je les retrouve chantant leur antithèse mélodique jusque sur le visage de ces deux héros. – Ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est que tous leurs tatouages et coloriations étaient faits selon les gammes naturelles et harmoniques.

It has something mysterious that pleases me more than I could ever believe. Red the color of blood, the color of life, was so abundant in this somber museum that it sent me reeling; as for the landscapes – wooded mountains, immense savannahs, deserted rivers – they were

monotonously, eternally green; red, this color so obscure, so thick, more difficult to penetrate than the eyes of a snake – green, this calm and gay and smiling color of nature, I find them singing their melodic antithesis even in the portrait of these two [Amerindian] heroes. – What is certain is that their tattoos and coloring were done according to harmonic and natural scales.

(2: 446, my italics)

The reconstruction of the scale of Catlin's colors is scripted into the line. The 'wooded mountains, immense savannahs, deserted rivers' (*rivières* that also plays on *vert*) are translated into the eight final syllables of the tenth line. They recall the form and color of the landscapes.<sup>6</sup>

In visual terms proper to sonnet, the symmetries of the tenth line would be static, even overwrought, if the median comma did not arrest and then push meaning from the first to the second hemistich. *Hautbois*, or oboes, puns on *haut bois*, or high forests; in a mimetic realm we would imagine the trees being green: hence, *les hauts bois verts* afford a reading of western mountains (the Rockies, Sierras, Grand Tetons, etc.), but that might project the comma to the end of the eighth syllable (*hauts bois verts, comme les prairies*). The measure would be utterly destroyed in view of the visual symmetry the text retains when *hautbois* is both attached to and separated from *verts*. A graphic confusion appears to match the synesthesia of images and perfumes. If it breaks and joins meaning as it seems, the comma calls attention to a multilingual or dialogical order in the rest of the poem. Because *comme*, the dominant comparative agent of the sonnet, is doubled in the line, it literally echoes in the fashion of the 'confuses paroles' or olfactive words (that are linked par-oles) redounding between 'paroles,' 'symboles,' and 'Qui l'observent' in lines 2–4. A word that is uttered returns, and in a style of 'echo poems' often practiced in baroque literature,<sup>7</sup> *comme* is thus heard and seen as a wave passing over the landscape of the sonnet.

For a bilingual reading, because of the comma, it is licit to discern *come* in 'comme.' We can translate the line as 'Sweet as the oboes, green as the prairies,' but nonetheless a general interference of English tends to 'come' out of the comparison or likeness in French. The polyvalence of *comme*, identical to that of the comma at the hemistich, allows the line to cross over from one linguistic realm to another. The verse can be scanned as

Doux *come* les hautbois, verts *come* les prairies,

hence, if the balance of the line and the translinguistic passage are taken into account, we can hear

D'où *come* les hautbois, where *come* les prairies,

because 'D'ou' that surges out of *Doux* encourages the reader to see the analogue of 'where' in *vert* to match *ou* of *D'ou* or *Doux*.<sup>8</sup> The result becomes an unconscious question asking what or where are the origins of the elements of a landscape in a poem. In accord with the medieval and baroque tradition of enigmatic and macaronic verse,<sup>9</sup> the poem responds simultaneously to the initial question it poses. The sonnet follows what Lucretius asks about the origins of things in *De rerum natura*. A protoscientific dimension is unveiled, in which atomic theory is associated with synesthesia and sensation. The poem appears to figure its own matter as verbal particles in a sort of Brownian movement, in which vocables, letters, and memory travel about randomly. Yet, in the narrative mold of the text, a voice awaits the return of its echo. It comes back in utter simultaneity, in

*Do come les hautbois, where come les prairies,*

in an imaginary subjunctive mood and question that beg, doubt, or hope that the world of objects (*choses infinies*, l. 12, in other words, the Latin *res* already couched in 'correspondances') will respond to the poet's invitation to meld words and things and causes and effects.<sup>10</sup> Since 'things' or objects are in question, we would not be wrong in reading the [,] as a graphic stroke or stop that marks 'comme,' 'comme-a,' and 'come-a' in miniature in the text. It becomes a spatial or pictorial correlative – an arrestive cipher but also a rupture that binds two terms by the hidden parataxis it brings – to the process that the poem develops in its narrative or its dialogue of the voices of Narcissus and Echo.

We can surmise that the imaginary coloration of the landscape, although connoted in the golden hue of *ambre* (l. 13), is painted specifically only once, by *verts*. If green is the effect of the poem's cause, inscribed in 'where' or in the homonym *vers*, it heralds amphiboly, where rational thinking is set in a coma, to be the poetic principle that moves across linguistic barriers. In doing so, passage yields chromatic effects. In 'Correspondances' *verts* owes its polyvalence to the unvoiced graph, *t*, that signals where and how meanings flow into and separate from one another. The green hues we recollect in imaginary forests are a result of the unvoiced letter that encourages the reader to establish a lexical boundary where in fact none really exists. Ironically, the unsolicited rhyme of *prairies* and *infinies* seems to call attention to clichés, so classical in the prosody Baudelaire inherits from earlier French poetry, that play on *mer* (with *mère*), *vert* (*vers* and *ver*), or *sang* (*sans* and *cent*), and other words, and are displaced into far more extensive nets of analogy. The commonplaces are put inside the frame of the poem in order not to 'freeze' meaning or be of limited range as they might when set in tonic position.

Elsewhere Baudelaire appeals to proper names to gain similar effects.

Since they cannot be fixed in the syntax, the figures become a function of syllepsis (a confusion of common and proper names). In the graphic unconscious of the poem, the letter of the proper name appears to be a hinge on which swing various idioms, discourses, and the figure of writing. A text contiguous to 'Correspondances' might be illustrative. In 'Phares,' a poem-pantheon containing the names of artists of both graphic and painterly wealth, Baudelaire ends the heroic enumeration with praise bestowed upon his most contemporary mentor, Delacroix. As the last sentences of the chapter on the landscape of the 1859 *Salon* also reveal, the poet ranks Delacroix's *paysages* next to those of Catlin and Victor Hugo. Here we encounter the same aura of green forests, but in a Dérain-like palette of colors, in which all artists of the past lead up to the great modern.

Delacroix, lac de sang des mauvais anges  
Ombragé par un bois de sapins toujours vert,  
Où, sous un ciel chagrin, des fanfares étranges  
Passent, comme un soupir étouffé de Weber

Delacroix, a lake of blood of evil angels  
Shadowed by woods of evergreens where,  
Under a chagrined sky, strange fanfares  
Pass like a muffled sigh of Weber.<sup>11</sup>

Green is associated with the forest of pines, as it seems to be in the tenth line of 'Correspondances,' but here the muffled music that Weber's name recalls conflates color and melody. 'Green' rhymes with Weber, but only through distortion of 'Weber' as 'Vay-bear' or 'way-bare.' The foreign name fits into the rhyme at the expense of a likely mispronunciation of the musician's German surname in French. Claude Pichois notes of the quatrain that Baudelaire in fact makes explicit his field of associations in an addendum to his articles written on Delacroix in the 1855 Exposition. *Un bois toujours vert* is set in tension with the other primary color, red, connoted in *lac de sang*. *Un ciel de chagrin* calls forth the 'tumultuous and stormy backgrounds' of the painter's great canvasses, and *Weber* recalls the 'ideas of Romantic music aroused by the harmonies of his color' (1: 854). Since, however, the rhyme places two different substantives into a relation of identity and difference, the graphic relation of *Weber* to *vert* allows *v* and *w* to play with and against each other. The *w* or 'double u' requires the name to be pronounced *V-ber* where the two *V*'s elide into one. The supplementary *V*, like the comma of the tenth line of 'Correspondances,' locates a point where a shift of idiom generates the imagination of chromatic wealth.<sup>12</sup> Two of the three primary colors, red and green, also dissolve into a play of line. Weber is a trait or signature that cannot be refracted except through the prism of the reader's

imagination. In this sense, the name moves from the presence of color – its painterly or Rubenesque dimension – to a more graphic, even Poussin-like clarity.<sup>13</sup>

Baudelaire's commentary on the quatrain does not fix the three primary colors into either an allegory or a code coordinating the names of artists with colors. He juxtaposes two of the three primary colors in this stanza, but the *yellow* that would complete the comparison is absent. It may be that the color figures further away in the poem, and that the first two lines of the eighth stanza thus correspond with the lines devoted to Delacroix. The fifth quatrain sketches impressions of the world of Puget's sculpture:

Colères de boxeur, impudence de faune,  
Toi qui sus ramasser la beauté des goujats,  
Grand cœur gonflé d'orgueil, homme débile et jaune,  
Puget, mélancolique empereur des forçats.

A boxer's ire, impudence of a beast  
You who knew how to gather the beauty of knaves,  
Great heart swollen with pride, of bile and jaundice,  
Puget, melancholy emperor of the slaves.

(1: 13, 11. 17–20)

The weakened 'yellow' man, Puget, completes the triangle of primary colors with Delacroix's lake of red blood and forest of 'evergreens' (*sapins toujours verts*, or balsam firs). Puget's debilitated condition links melancholy with jaundice or the misery of galley slaves in the lower depths. What is feeble (*débile*) also inflects the humor associated with the liver (jaundice and *bile*). By extension, the athletes recall the muscular criminals who serve as models for a sculptor whom Baudelaire ranks on a scale close to the nineteenth-century painter. They can also allude to the men whom Delacroix had photographed for his paintings. Confusions are established between one of the visual arts and the new invention of photography.

No sooner than when the order of primary colors is glimpsed in the poem, its stability is jostled by means of translation. The uncommon term inaugurating the stanza is *boxeur*. The word is not frequent in French literature, nor does it recur often in Baudelaire's lyrics. The substantive appears to be marked by its euphony with English and thus introduces new elements into the configuration. The world of modern gladiators is evoked through a word and a sport imported from the British Isles. *Boxe* comes to France in 1698, while *boxer*, to 'box,' dates to 1722 and *boxeur* to 1788. Here the text appears to be underlining the very strangeness of the word at the same time as it emphasizes the pictorial and

volumetric frame of 'box,' the support or surround of the works of art being extolled.

Yet the formula *colères de boxeur* forces its own misprision or productive misreading when scanned between French and English – as in the tenth line of 'Correspondances' – such that *colères*, adjacent to *boxeur*, invokes in the montage or verbal synesthesia an echo of *couleur*, or a 'color of boxers' that soon elides into the yellow of Puget. As the flow of the quatrain seems to indicate, all the attributes that are enumerated precede the name of the artist and lead to him when *Puget* is spelled at the incipit of the final line. In 'Phares,' this is in glaring contrast to the seven other stanzas that begin with the surnames of each of the great masters. In the logical inversion, *colères* would have to be awarded a capital or allegorical status that rivals with the proper names. Bestly impudence, the beauty of the *goujats* (recalling a *gouge*, or burly soldier), the great swollen heart of pride, and the jaundiced color of weakness converge upon *Puget*. Through syllepsis, the sound of the proper name again serves to collapse the descriptive wealth of the stanza because it puts in view, in the screen of two idioms, the French homologue to the English *boxeur*, a constellation of words that groups about *pugilat* or *pugiliste*. 'Puget' translates the '*colères de boxeur*' into an echo of French that describes the English sport of boxing.<sup>14</sup> It appears thus that 'yellow' emerges from and recedes into the crossovers that the verse stages in the movement between *boxeur* and *Puget*, and that in turn the translinguistic exchange constitutes a harmonic and chromatic background to the various allusions to engraving and lithography in the surrounding quatrains. These instances of self-translation yield a poetry that displaces the French idiom into other languages, and in so doing makes its own process so visible that the typographical and pictural dimensions of the words float as graphs or letters between one language and another. The poems open and close their sensory worlds according to these inner shifts, as seen here and most dramatically in the *art poétique* of 'Correspondances.'

In order not to insist too much on what might seem unwarranted or gratuitous in the relation of translation and color, we can compare Baudelaire's effects to other verse. Rimbaud, another poet who manifests intense combinations of color and language, seems to work in the same fashion. Literary historians and analysts have often compared 'Correspondances' to 'Voyelles.'<sup>15</sup> The famous sonnet of 1871 has, as F. C. St.-Aubyn remarked, generated more analysis than any of his other short works.<sup>16</sup> The sum of interpretations confirms René Etiemble's conclusions about the poem's general incoherence, loose construction, frequent Latinisms, and display of literary images.<sup>17</sup> To be sure, any analysis that comes to that point or that argues that new meanings of the sonnet will be generated as long as there will be new readers takes little



risk.<sup>18</sup> The poem is not evidence of relativity because it has a method, a technique, and a history. In the context developed here, we can assert that 'Voyelles' above all engages broader issues of translation, poetry, and politics. The sonnet was composed shortly after Rimbaud left high school and, like most of his visionary work of the year 1871, bristles with adolescent visions of timeless radiance:

## VOYELLES

A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu: Voyelles,  
 Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes;  
 A, noir corset velu des mouches éclatantes  
 Qui bombinent autour des puanteurs cruelles,  
 Golfes d'ombre; E, candeurs des vapeurs et des tentes,  
 Lances des glaciers fiers, rous blancs, frissons d'ombelles;  
 I, pourpres, sang craché, rire des lèvres belles  
 Dans la colère ou les ivresses pénitentes;  
 U, cycles, vibrations divins des mers virides,  
 Paix des pâtes semés d'animaux, paix des rides  
 Que l'alchimie imprime aux grands fronts studieux;  
 O, suprême Clairon plein des strideurs étranges,  
 Silences traversés des Mondes et des Anges,  
 - O l'Oméga, rayon violet de Ses Yeux!<sup>19</sup>

The poem exploits the letter to produce inscriptions that separate expression from meaning. The printed character is marked as a neutral form that is both a repository and an absence of signification.<sup>20</sup> The letters AEIOU amount to marks that precede meaning along a temporal axis - perhaps of staged psychogenesis - that moves from inscription to comprehension. They inscribe both beginnings and vacuities of sense within a mass of symbolic shapes and expressions of sensation. Because the letters translate into a world where no presence of a pre-given language or a code is assured, the vowels can be read as ideograms, hieroglyphs, or rebusses that frustrate and defeat any monolingual reading of the poem that will originate in a given 'nation' with the self-constructed history of its language and genealogy.<sup>21</sup> They belong to an alphabet that is shared by various idioms and can, in a dialogic manner, include transversal and multiple simultaneous readings within themselves and their adjacent vocables. The poem shunts between sensation that knows no language in the myth of the originary division of linguistic substance into vowels and consonants (or other grounding oppositions of culture, such as male and female), and that reaches into a lexical infinity by means of analogy.<sup>22</sup>

But the sonnet draws attention to literal forms to guide the course of its

translation – and transvaluation – of language back and forth from sensation to verbal and graphic matter. Rimbaud revives the common structure of a *sonnet rapporté* frequently used in the French Renaissance. Pléiade poets set forth three or four elements in the first two quatrains of their verse before regrouping them in acceleration in the last lines of the tercets. Rimbaud seems to be using the first line to summarize what a Ronsard or a Jodelle would have reserved for the fourteenth in some of the *Amours* and *Contr-amours*. Lines 2–13 flesh out the impressions of each vowel before O, the ‘Omega,’ the ‘violet ray’ of his or her eyes, ends with the capital Y that signals the presence of a half-vowel and a bifurcating letter, a ‘Greek I’ (*i-grec*) that crowns the poem. The text calls into question the ostensive Greekness or Latin *rigor mortis* of its form with the first allusion to the alphabet in Omega noted within the same line. Y is the letter that corresponds in placement and in shape to *voyelles* of the first line, and is found elsewhere in the text in minuscule, in ‘U, cycles’ (l. 9), and in equal size and shape in the capital letter of the title, VOYELLES, in superscription above. Not only does the letter Y mark the limit between the poem and its silence or absence at the end of the fourteenth line. It also demarcates the limit one can draw between the title, ‘Voyelles,’ as a set of either five, six, or eight letters, since the word can refer to the sum of pure vowels (5), be counted serially as a total number of digits (8), or add up to the sum of characters (6), from V + O + Y + E + L + S. Y also drives a wedge between a consonant and vowel by virtue of its latent status as either one or both and the other, thus impugning the entire taxonomy of the poem’s extended comparison. The ‘naissances latentes’ of the vowels originate in the difference marked by the Y of the *Yeux* at the end of the poem, a grapheme that seems to focalize the chromatic range that has been developed through images associated with each vowel.

In Y the system of colors and vowels meets an origin and a finality that an existential or psychoanalytical reading would invest in the ‘other,’ that most male readers would probably fancy as a woman with violet eyes, a Petrarchan type whose pupils emit shafts that cripple the young man (in their eyes, the ‘ideal reader’) who dares to look at her or fall under her spell. Analysis of this kind might seek in the figure of the poet another of a child searching for an earthy, erotic, and maternal female who conflates the roles of the mother and the lover (e.g., the buxom barmaid of ‘Au cabaret-vert, cinq heures du soir’). The sonnet resists such a reading whenever the pictorial domain of autonomous translation is seen generating the text. The poem encodes red, blue, green, and purple along with black and white. As in Baudelaire’s ‘Phares,’ it inscribes the term *colère* to traduce a sensation of both ire and *color*:

I pourpres, sang craché, rire des lèvres belles

Dans la *colère* ou les ivresses pénitentes.

Purple and red move toward the laugh of the pretty lips, a figure so iridescent that, again, readers cannot fail to confuse *couleur* with *colère*, and all the more since the *u* missing from *couleur* comes immediately, after a brief delay, at the beginning of the following line. In the enumeration of sensations and forms the only color that the sonnet fails to denote – now unlike ‘Phares’ – is *jaune*. It is suggested in reference to alchemy, the art that seeks to turn the gray or somber hue of lead into the amber shine of gold; or in the brass connoted by the figure of the clarion ‘plein des strideurs étranges.’ But in the final line, the *rayon violet de ses yeux* diverts attention from the color that we had expected to find in the coordination of vowels with the palette of primary and complementary colors.

Only through translation does the color emerge. In the final tercet, the letters begin to resonate in a volley of O. The closure of the majuscule apparently opens the poem onto its plenitude of voice: ‘O, suprême Clairon . . . – O l’Oméga,’ or the O that precedes the mega-O, closes the open bottom of the Greek Omega (Ω). And the apotheosis of the poem, an imaginary trumpet-blast, casts its characters in the line in order to obey the laws of the *sonnet rapporté*, in

O, l’Oméga, rayon violet de Ses Yeux,

in a volley of minuscule *a*, *i*, *o*, *e*, and finally, *u*. Because they partake of a lettristic tradition of rhyme, by which each character translates into a word,<sup>23</sup> the letters can figure as a juncture of various idioms. Here the last vowel, *U*, would equal *you*, who is also *yeux*, or a transliteration of the second person singular or plural English pronoun into ‘eyes’ or the vowel ‘I.’ *Yeux* are eyes, or ‘you are I’s,’ etc. If this play seems to be elicited by the tonic position of *Yeux* at the end of lower right corner of the sonnet’s frame, then its majuscule character Y must somehow, following the practice of most Symbolists, find the presence of a transcending idea within the word. *Yeux* would signal a platonically ideal form or else the Eye of all possible eyes.

But the poem again resists any reduction to essences: the Y marks only the second inscription of the half-vowel in *voYelles*, and responds thus at the end of the poem to the keystone word at the end of the first line and in the title above. As such it appears to have an emblematic function, as a shape subscribing a central inscription (the poem itself seen as a picture in a surround) and the motto or apothegm above. Y is both attached to and apart from *voyelles* and hence turns the title into a translation of itself, into ‘yellow.’ The great solar color radiates from the oral traits at the bottom of the poem, as if to

Yell-O

or yell-o-w, that is, yell-o-you, 'yell, "oh you!" ' etc., in a translinguistic flash of illumination, shining with an aura of immortal time before and beyond linguistic difference. *Voyelles* transliterates into yellow.

The absent term is scripted into the poem through its other, understood here as English. But it radiates across the screen or scumble of French in order, it appears, to stage an explosion of language. The illumination is exactly what Rimbaud folds into the penultimate quatrain of the 'Bateau ivre,' when the voice remarks,

Si je désire une eau d'Europe, c'est la flache  
Noire et humide où vers le crépuscule embaumé  
Un enfant accroupi plein de tristesse, lâche  
Un bateau frêle comme un papillon de mai,

If I wish for Europe's waters it's the flache  
Black and wet where toward the embalmed dark  
Full of sadness, a child bent and squat,  
Will let, like a butterfly of May, a frail boat embark,

in which the puddle (*flaque* from the Picard dialect *flache*) is transformed into a radiant *flash* that comes across the maritime passage narrated throughout the greater part of the poem. The site of the beginning and the end of the radiation is the central *où vers*, the very place where Baudelaire translated his own displacement into two languages at once, where the color of his prosody issues from the movement of idioms.<sup>24</sup>

We can observe that 'Voyelles' is tied to the inner project of Baudelaire's 'Correspondances,' and that it engages translation of letter and language to yield color in the instantaneous explosion that takes place with condensation of linguistic difference. His project is begun on the 'prairies' of the French imagination of the American West, in the Parisian context of George Catlin's Indians and savannahs. It is drawn through poetry that literally paints its images with words and letters that are born in translation. As a final note, we can add that the politics of the activity appear to be deeply invested in both Baudelaire and Rimbaud. The two poets summon issues concerning the practice of translation as a productive and disruptive *articulation* that changes the borders and limits of what we consider to be a canon, a language, a tradition, and history. Baudelaire uses color and translation to be rid of the pompous and constipated art of the Second Empire. Rimbaud fractures ossified models of 'primary' education that impose on children the unilateral paternity of Latin and French. He opens language onto different worlds in which its users live in the precarious movement of sensation that the ideology of a nation, of 'French,' of 'English,' or other official emblems cannot regulate.

## NOTES

- 1 *Pictorialist Poetics: Poetry and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 21.
- 2 What follows will recoup observations of Samuel Beckett in our 'Color, Letter, and Line,' *Visible Language*, 19 (1985): 494-8 and 'Pictogramme et critique littéraire,' *Topique: revue freudienne*, 46 (1991): 269-79.
- 3 'Le paysage,' in Claude Pichois, ed., *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 2: 660. Here and elsewhere all translations from the French are my responsibility.
- 4 Although not dealing with this thread of 'Le paysage,' David Scott arrives at the same conclusions when he notes that wherever Baudelaire transposes images of paintings into poetry, 'the text itself strives to re-embody its own object, the "tableau-poème," by becoming itself a "poème-tableau"' (*Pictorialist Poetics*, p. 100).
- 5 *Œuvres complètes*, 1: 11. The poem everywhere writes of translation (transport, confused words, passage) but is impossible to translate without destroying its balanced tones of oracular voice, of declaration (with its didactic strain in the first line), and verbal synesthesia. Roughly put,
 

Nature is a temple where every living pillar  
 Sometimes releases confused words;  
 Man passes across symbols, of forest and woods  
 That observe him with looks that seem familiar.  
 Like long echoes that from afar are mixed together  
 In a shadowy and a profound unity,  
 Vast as the night and as all clarity,  
 Perfumes, colors, and sounds speak to one another.  
 There are perfumes fresh as a baby's flesh,  
 Soft as oboes, green as the plains,  
 - And others, corrupt, triumphant and rich,  
 Having the expansion of infinite things,  
 Like amber, musk, benjamin, and incenses,  
 That sing of the transport of the spirit and senses.
- 6 See the illustrations in George Catlin, *Life Among the Indians and Last Rambles*, ed. Marvin C. Ross (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979). Catlin's importance as ethnographer is documented in Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 111-12. See also Robert Beetem, 'George Catlin in France: His Relationship to Delacroix and Baudelaire,' *Art Quarterly*, 24 (1961): 129-44.
- 7 Such as the echo-poems in *Le printemps d'Yver* (1572), reprinted in Pierre Jourda, *Conteurs français du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), in Charles Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant* (1627), or other variants in the baroque era.
- 8 Where figures significantly in Baudelaire's poetry. We need only recall the English title of one of the prose-poems that reproduces an atmosphere of Rembrandt's painting ('triste hôpital') in 'Anywhere Out of the World' (1: 356-7).
- 9 We can recall that Thomas Sebillet, in his chapter on 'De l'énigme,' in his *Art poétique françoys* (1546), probably the most influential manual of the sixteenth century (Du Bellay notwithstanding), noted that an enigma is a description whose virtue is 'obscurité tant dilucide que le bon esprit la puisse éclaircir après s'y'être quelque peu appliqué / obscurity so clear that a good

mind can enlighten it by means of a little study.' The passage is in fact adjacent to his praise of translation, quoted in Francis Goyet, ed., *Traité de poétique et de rhétorique à la Renaissance* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1990), pp. 139 and 145-7.

- 10 So subtle is the montage of graphic characters and languages that the beginning of the first line appears to articulate the declaration objectally before its discursive statement is completed: 'La nature *est* un temple.' Clearly, Baudelaire sees Latin through French and plays on the history of one language evolving into another.
- 11 *Œuvres complètes*, 1: 14.
- 12 One might also remark that the Germanic name comes forward in the difference between 'way-ber' and 'vay-ber,' and thus underscores the present of the double u, or the *U-ber*, connoting the presence of a translative operation of the 'Uber-setzer.' When, in his essay on the problems of translating Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin underscores how much the translator has to heed the literal aspect of the original poetry, he draws our attention to the force of the letter as a mark that joins different languages in the virtue of its form.
- 13 Debates of color and line reside in the poem. At the same time, the play on 'Weber' and 'V-bare' arches toward Mallarmé's praise of winter as a graphic sign, but thanks to the emblematic tradition. For Mallarmé, the majuscule I is colored green in winter (in 'hiver' or *I-vert*, the same hieroglyph illustrated in one of Tabourot's Picard rebusses in the *Bigarrures* of 1583, in which a man holds a great letter 'I' that the motto says is painted green). For both writers, *vert* and its correlatives designate *where* color emanates from the juncture of two or more languages according to analogy at play between graphic and discursive layers of writing.
- 14 In the unconscious of the text, it may be that Baudelaire's choice of *boxeur* is made for resolutely 'modern' reasons because the word reflects the sensations of current life and popular sport, while the pugilistic echoes of Puget recall the 'ancients' in their relation with the Latin roots in *pugil* that derives from *pugnis* or 'fist.' The stanza would thus be translating into itself the spirit of the 'Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes' that Baudelaire thematizes in 'L'Albatros' and elsewhere.
- 15 See, for example, Octave Mannoni, *Clefs pour l'imaginaire, ou l'autre scène* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), pp. 202-17.
- 16 Arthur Rimbaud, updated edition (Boston: Twayne, 1988), pp. 29-32. He refers to Jean-Bertrand Barrère, 'Rimbaud, l'apprenti-sorcier, en rêvant aux "Voyelles" (une hypothèse investigatoire),' *Revue de l'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, 56 (1956): 50-64; Paul Delboulle, 'Le sonnet des voyelles d'Arthur Rimbaud,' in *Poésies et sonorités* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1961), pp. 28-51; Robert Faurisson, 'Le Bateau ivre, essai d'explication,' *La Bibliothèque volante*, 4 (1971): 57-61; Anne-Marie Frank, "'Voyelles," un adieu au vers latins,' *Poétique*, 60 (1984): 411-22; Claudine Hunting, 'La voix de Rimbaud: nouveau point de vue sur les "naissances latentes" des "Voyelles,"' *Publication of the Modern Language Association*, 88 (1973): 472-83; Pierre Martino, 'Contribution à l'étude du sonnet des voyelles,' in *Mélanges de linguistique et de la littérature offerts à Mario Roques* (Paris: Didier, 1952), 3: 145-8; C. L. Van Roosbroeck, 'Decadence and Rimbaud's Sonnet of the Vowels,' in *The Legend of the Decadents* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927), pp. 21-39. Noteworthy is Frank's hypothesis that the sonnet emerges from

Rimbaud's Latin lessons in secondary school, and that its style and temper move across the poet's relation with the dead language.

- 17 René Etiemble, *Le sonnet des 'voyelles'* (Paris: Gallimard, 1958).
- 18 Not included in St.-Aubyn's review is Atle Kittang, in *Discours et jeu* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires, 1975), who calls 'Voyelles' 'at once a multiple scriptural game that works at different levels, and the elaboration of a thematic structure that is condensed in this favored metaphoric figure that is, for Rimbaud, the woman' (p. 286). Since gender is culturally formed, the limits of this reading are obvious. To Kittang's credit is the interrogation of Mannoni's refusal to see how lines and colors are related. He cites the analyst: 'There remains a considerable difficulty: that is, with the form of the vowels, it is always difficult to justify the colors' (see Mannoni, *Clefs pour l'imaginaire*, p. 213). Mannoni, reading 'Correspondances,' wants to devalorize the rebus and riddle in order to emphasize what is really 'at the origins.' It is strange that such an accomplished Freudian fails to look across language in the way that the author of the *Traumdeutung* had done so often.
- 19 In Daniel Leuvers, ed., *Poésies complètes de Rimbaud* (Paris: Livre de Poches, 1984), p. 91. Can it be translated? Perhaps:

A black, E white, I red, U green, O blue: vowels,  
I will say some day the latency of your birth.  
A, black fuzzy corset exploding with flies at its girth  
That bombine all about cruel stench of bowels.

Gulfs of shadow; E, candors and vapors of tents,  
Shafts of proud glaciers, white kings, shivers of umbels,  
I, purple, blood spit, laughter of handsome lips  
In anger or in drunken penitence.

U, cycles, divine vibrations of viridious seas,  
Piece of pastures sown with animals, wrinkled peace  
That alchemy prints on a studious face on high.

U, supreme Clarion filled with strange stridence,  
Worlds and angels crossing over in silence,  
- O the Omega, violet rays of these Eyes!

- 20 In this sense, the letter-vowels embody what Marie-Claire Ropars calls 'the double dimension of language that is as much graphic as it is phonetic,' which means that 'the area reserved for visible form does not cut into the invisible reserve of content,' in *Ecraniques: le film du texte* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1990), p. 23.
- 21 In *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), Kristin Ross shows that Rimbaud develops 'lexical fields' or 'constellations' that do not separate signifiers from signifieds, or *swarms* of meaning. Expression resists 'use values' or content analysis (p. 104). She uses *bombiner* of 'Voyelles' to arch from 'buzzing,' a verb chosen among English translators, to link with the Middle English *bomben*, an onomatopoeia 'signifying "boom" as well as "buzz" ' (p. 105). Aimé Césaire pushes forward to *bombilation*, or bombardment, that evokes a 'machine de guerre' of the twentieth century. The atomism of Rimbaud's poetry envelops a history of logistics and hence has strong political innuendo going far beyond the time of the Paris Commune. Ross suggests that political poetry of French expression among colonized subjects has origins in Rimbaud and includes Césaire and Edmond Glissant.

- 22 Here the dialogic condition, in which vowel-letters mediate worlds of sensation and language, can be compared to childhood recollections in different cultural matrices. Where Rimbaud uncovers a rich chromatic rhetoric of the unconscious that is declined by letters, Montaigne in 'Du repentir' happens not upon a pre-symbolic world of semiotic flow, but another language – an unconscious of Latin grammar – identical to a primal scream:

We cannot extirpate these originary qualities, we cover them, we hide them. Latin language is as if natural to me, I understand it better than French, but forty years have passed since I have either spoken or written it: now in the extreme and sudden emotions in which I have fallen two or three times in my life, once, seeing my strapping father pounce upon me, aghast, I always released from the bottom of my entrails my first Latin words.

(*Essais*, ed. Pierre Villey  
[Paris: PUF/Quadrige, 1988], p. 810)

- In contrast, in 'Voyelles' a world of sensation seems to background the discourse. The poem brings forth illuminations beyond language or meaning.
- 23 The *Grands rhétoriciens* and Clément Marot practiced the art in the early Renaissance. See Frank Lestringant, notes to the *Adolescence clémentine - rondeau xviii* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), p. 369.
- 24 In *Improvisation sur Rimbaud* (Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1989), Michel Butor notes that the quatrain situates the poet both near to and far from America and Europe. Voyage, he suggests, is itself translation (p. 105). He notes that 'Voyelles' corresponds to the letter to Demeny, a text that treats of 'la traduction d'un sens à l'autre, d'une région de la langue à l'autre' (translation from one meaning to another, from one region of language to the other [p. 123]). Butor does not examine where these regions embody their difference to themselves in their own polylingual intensity.



# I. U. TARCHETTI'S POLITICS OF TRANSLATION; OR, A PLAGIARISM OF MARY SHELLEY

*Lawrence Venuti*

All translations are made at the instigation of a linguistic community's instinct for self-preservation. But the masters of translation: enraptured and possessed by this spirit of language they put their will at its service and go out to loot forms, raid the neighbouring languages and literatures as well as those artistic treasures farthest removed in space and time, and with the wolf's hunger of esthetic imperialism they grasp whatever they lust after. In order to keep it, though, to carry it off and integrate it into the linguistic spirit of their nation, they have to break up the foreign form and still save the best and the most profound of it and bring it home unharmed.

(Karl Vossler, *Geist und Kultur der Sprache*, trans. André Lefevere)

Iginio Ugo Tarchetti (1839–69) belonged to the Milanese movement known as the *scapigliatura*, a loosely associated group of artists, composers, and writers who contested bourgeois values in their bohemianism (*scapigliato* means 'dishevelled') and in their formal innovations. The literary members of this group were dissatisfied with the highly conservative realism which dominated Italian fiction since Alessandro Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* (*The Betrothed* [1827, rev. 1840]). And some of them abandoned Manzoni's sentimental Christian providentialism for a democratically oriented representation of class divisions, realistic but also romantic, historically detailed yet melodramatic, often with a topical engagement in events surrounding the Italian Unification, like the Austrian presence or the Italian conscript army.<sup>1</sup> Tarchetti's first novel, *Paolina* (1865), follows a seamstress who is persecuted by an aristocrat and ultimately raped and murdered; his second novel, *Una nobile follia* (*A Noble Madness* [1866–7]), a protest against the new standing army, focuses on a military officer moved to desertion by distracted, pacifistic musings. Tarchetti's later experiments take more extreme forms. *Fosca* (1869), a novel about a pathological love affair, mixes several fictional

discourses – romantic, fantastic, realistic, naturalistic – to counter the notion of character as a unified subjectivity.<sup>2</sup> In a number of short narratives, some of which were posthumously published in 1869 as *Racconti fantastici* (*Fantastic Tales*), Tarchetti deploys the conventions and motifs of nineteenth-century fantasy to issue a fundamental challenge to realist representation and its ideological grounding in bourgeois individualism.

Most interestingly, the appropriation of foreign texts is a crucial component of Tarchetti's cultural politics. He is the first practitioner of the Gothic tale in Italy, and most of his fantastic narratives are based on specific texts by writers like Hoffmann, Poe, Nerval, Gautier, and Erckmann-Chatrian.<sup>3</sup> Tarchetti adapts fantastic motifs, reproduces scenes, translates, even plagiarizes – yet each discursive practice serves the political function of interrogating ideologies and addressing hierarchical social relations. His fantastic narratives mobilize foreign texts to question the hegemony of realist discourse in Italian fiction, and this mobilization, insofar as it entails transforming the foreign texts to function in a different cultural formation, simultaneously critiques them from a different ideological standpoint. Tarchetti's Gothic tales can act as a model of how forms of appropriation like translation operate as political interventions into specific social conjunctures.

## I

The fantastic proves to be subversive of bourgeois ideology because it negates the formal conventions of realism and the individualistic concept of subjectivity on which they rest. The realist representation of chronological time, three-dimensional space, and personal identity is based on an empiricist epistemology which privileges a single, perceiving subject: the key assumption is that human consciousness is the origin of meaning, knowledge, and action, transcending discursive and ideological determinations.<sup>4</sup> The unity of time and space in realism points to a unified consciousness, usually a narrator or character taken to be authorial, and this subject-position establishes intelligibility in the narrative, making a specific meaning seem real or true, repressing the fact that it is an illusory effect of discourse, and thus suturing the reading consciousness into an ideological position, an interested ensemble of values, beliefs, and social representations. The truth-effect of realism, the illusion of transparency whereby language disappears and the world or the author seems present, shows that the form itself reproduces the transcendental concept of subjectivity in bourgeois individualism: as Catherine Belsey indicates,

Through the presentation of an intelligible history which effaces its own status as discourse, classic realism proposes a model in which

author and reader are subjects who are the source of shared meanings, the origin of which is mysteriously extra-discursive. . . . This model of intersubjective understanding, of shared understanding of a text which re-presents the world, is the guarantee not only of the truth of the text but of the reader's existence as an autonomous and knowing subject in a world of knowing subjects. In this way, classic realism constitutes an ideological practice in addressing itself to readers as subjects, interpellating them in order that they freely accept their subjectivity and their subjection.<sup>5</sup>

The fantastic undermines the transcendental subject in realist discourse by creating an uncertainty about the metaphysical status of the narrative. Often this uncertainty is provoked by using the formal conventions of realism to represent a fantastic disorder of time, space, and character and thereby to suspend the reader between two discursive registers, the mimetic and the marvelous. Confronted with the fantastic, the reader experiences what Tzvetan Todorov calls a 'hesitation' between natural and supernatural explanations: 'The fantastic . . . lasts only as long as a certain hesitation: a hesitation common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from "reality" as it exists in the common opinion.'<sup>6</sup> The unified consciousness of realism is thus split between opposing alternatives, intelligibility gives way to doubt, and the reader is released from the ideological positioning in the text, able to perceive that 'the common opinion' of reality encodes moral values and serves political interests, that subjectivity is not transcendental but determinate, a site of confused meanings, ideological contradictions, social conflicts. The fantastic explodes the formal conventions of realism in order to reveal their individualistic assumptions; but by introducing an epistemological confusion, a fantastic narrative can also interrogate the ideological positions it puts to work, expose their concealment of various relations of domination, and encourage thinking about social change. In the fantastic, Hélène Cixous observes, 'the subject flounders in the exploded multiplicity of its states, shattering the homogeneity of the ego of unawareness, spreading out in every possible direction, into every possible contradiction, transegoistically'; and it is this discursive strategy that distinguishes nineteenth-century writers like Hoffmann as opponents of 'logocentrism, idealism, theologism, all the props of society, the scaffolding of political and subjective economy, the pillars of society.'<sup>7</sup>

Tarchetti's thinking on the relations between fictional discourse and ideology can be glimpsed in an essay from the start of his brief career, 'Idee minime sul romanzo' ('Minimum Ideas on the Novel'), published in the periodical *Rivista minima* on 31 October 1865.<sup>8</sup> This statement shows

him slipping uneasily between various positions, advocating different kinds of fictional discourse, assuming different concepts of subjectivity, imagining different forms of social organization. He initially asserts a realist view of the novel, likening it to history:

Dalle prime confidenze, dalle prime rivelazioni che gli uomini fecero agli uomini, dal primo affetto, dal primo dolore, dalla prima speranza, nacque il romanzo che è la storia del cuore umano e della famiglia, come la storia propriamente detta è il romanzo della società e della vita pubblica.

From the first confidences, from the first revelations men make to men, from the first emotion, the first pain, the first hope, is born the novel, which is the history of the human heart and the family, just as history properly named is called the novel of society and public life.

(II: 523)

But then Tarchetti proceeds to argue for the priority of fictional over historical representation and puts the truth-effect of realism into question, characterizing the novel as an imaginary resolution to social contradictions, a genre which fictively compensates for the 'terribile odissea di delitti / terrible odyssey of crimes' in history and makes possible a renewal of social life:

ebbi tra le mani un romanzo, e per poco io fui tentato di riconciliarmi [uomini]; non dirò quanto mi apparissero diversi da quelli conosciuti nelle storie, non accennerò a quel mondo meraviglioso che mi si aperse allo sguardo: nel romanzo conobbi l'uomo libero, nella storia aveva conosciuto l'uomo sottoposto all'uomo.

I held a novel in my hands, and in a little while I was tempted to reconcile myself to [men]; I shall not say how different they appeared to me from those I encountered in histories, I shall not note the marvelous world that opened to me at a glance: in the novel I knew man free, in history I knew man subjected to man.

(II: 523)

Discourse produces concrete social effects, the novel can alter subjectivity and motor social change, even for a literary Bohemian like Tarchetti, whose *scapigliato* refusal to conform to the canons of bourgeois respectability dooms him to the margins of Italian society. For the novel to have this social function, however, it would seem that realism must be rejected: a realist discourse like history can represent social life only as an 'odyssey,' a wandering, an atomization in which agents victimize one another; the novel can contribute to a social homecoming, the reconstruction of a collective, only by representing a 'marvelous world' wherein hierarchical social relations are resolved.

Tarchetti's distinction between the freedom of the novel and the subjection of history at first appears a romantic retreat from society to culture, a transcendental aesthetic realm where the subject can regain its self-possession, its autonomy, although at the expense of a withdrawal from political engagement.<sup>9</sup> Tarchetti does in fact revert to romantic expressive theory at various points in the essay, validating an individualistic program of authorial self-expression, transparent discourse, and illusionistic response: he favors writers whose

vita intima . . . rimane in un'armonia così perfetta colle loro opere, che il lettore non è tentato di dire a sé stesso: la mia commozione è intempestiva, quell'uomo scriveva per ragionamento; buttiamo il libro che non nacque che dall'ingegno.

inner life . . . remains in such perfect harmony with their works, that the reader is not tempted to say to himself: my emotion is inappropriate, that man wrote to argue a position; we toss away any book that issues only from ingenuity.

(II: 531)

At other points, however, Tarchetti views the novel not as a window onto the author, 'le onde trasparenti di quei laghi che nelle loro calma lasciano scorgere il letto che le contiene / the transparent waves of those lakes which in their calmness allow a glimpse of the bed containing them' (II: 531), but rather as a historically specific 'forma di letteratura' / 'form of literature' (II: 522), a genre of literary discourse with a social significance that exceeds authorial psychology:

L'Italia composta di tanti piccoli stati, diversi tutti per leggi, per usi, per dialetto, per abitudini sociali, e direi quasi per suolo, doveva creare dei grandi e svariati romanzi.

Italy, composed of many small states, with entirely different laws, customs, dialects, social practices, and I would almost say soils, should produce great and extremely varied novels.

(II: 526)

And when Tarchetti describes the value of a long tradition in the novel, it is clear that fictional discourse is never free of social determinations:

Se il romanzo fosse così antico quanto la storia, e avesse avuto in tutti tempi e in tutte le nazioni quella popolarità di cui ora fruisce in Europa, quante tenebre sarebbero diradate, quanta luce sarebbe fatta sopra molti punti ignorati, sopra le arti, le costumanze, le leggi e le abitudini e la vita domestica di molti popoli, cui la storia non si riferisce che per i rapporti politici con altri popoli. Quale felicità, quale esuberanza di vita morale nel rivivere in un passato così

remoto, quanti insegnamenti per l'età presente, quale sviluppo nelle nostre facoltà immaginative, e direi quasi quante illusioni nella potenza della nostra fede e delle nostre memorie, e quale rassegnazione maggiore nel nostro destino! S'egli è vero che l'umanità progredisca lentamente, ma in modo sicura, e che nulla possa arrestare e far retrocedere il genio nel suo cammino, i nostri posteri, fra migliaia di anni, vivranno moralmente della nostra vita attuale: le lettere avranno raggiunto per essi quello scopo sublime e generale, che è di moltiplicare ed accrescere ed invigorire nello spirito quelle mille ed infinite sensazioni per le quali si manifesta il sentimento gigantesco della vita.

If the novel were as ancient as history, and at all times and in all nations had the popularity which it now enjoys in Europe, how many shadows would have been cleared away, how much light would have been cast on many neglected points, on the arts, the customs, the laws and habits and domestic life of many countries whose history refers only to political relations with other countries. What happiness there would be, what exuberance of moral life in reliving such a remote past, what lessons for the present age, what development of our imaginative faculties, and I would almost say how many illusions in the power of our faith and our memories, and what greater resignation to our fate! If it is true that humanity progresses slowly, but steadily, and that nothing can stop or drive genius backward in its path, our posterity, in thousands of years, will live our current moral life: for them letters will have reached that sublime and general goal, which is to multiply and increase and invigorate in the spirit the thousands and infinite sensations by which the gigantic sentiment of life is manifested.

(II: 523-4)

The beginning of this remarkably discontinuous passage has Tarchetti optimistically treating fictional discourse as a liberating source of knowledge and utopian imagining, assuming a liberal humanism in which the novel restores to subjectivity its freedom and unity ('development of our imaginative faculties'). Yet Tarchetti's sudden reference to 'illusions' skeptically revises this view: the novel now becomes a source of individualistic mystifications ('illusions in the power of our faith and our memories') and imaginary compensations for frustrated desire ('greater resignation to our fate'), whereby the passage shifts to the assumption that subjectivity is always situated in transindividual conditions of which it can never be fully conscious or free. In the end, the 'progresses' of 'humanity' seem measured not by a liberal model of social life which guarantees personal identity and autonomy, but a democratic collective characterized by subjective difference and cultural heterogeneity ('the

gigantic sentiment of life'). Hence, the 'letters' which represent and sustain this democracy aim 'to multiply and increase and invigorate in the spirit . . . thousands and infinite sensations.' The kind of fictional discourse suggested by this aim seems less a panoramic representation of social groups which adheres to the unities of realism, than a social delirium which proliferates psychological states and confounds temporal and spatial coordinates, representing that 'marvelous world' where the reader is freed from social isolation.

In evaluating the current situation of the Italian novel, Tarchetti's constant theme is the moral and political failure of realism. He laments that Italy lacks a strong tradition in the novel in contrast to other countries. Amid much praise for English, American, German, and French writers, Manzoni is degraded as second-rate:

Non vi ha luogo a dubitare che *I promessi sposi* sieno finora il migliore romanzo italiano, ma non occorre dimostrare come esso non sia che un mediocre romanzo in confronto dei capolavori delle altre nazioni.

There is no room to doubt that *I promessi sposi* has so far been the best Italian novel, but it is unnecessary to demonstrate that it is a mediocre novel compared to the masterpieces of other nations.

(II: 528)

Tarchetti repeats a list of defects in Manzoni's novel and attributes them to its realist discourse:

in quanto all'accusa mossagli da taluno, che in quel libro via sia poco cuore, che quell'eterno episodio (quantunque bellissimo) della monaca, nuoccia più che altro al romanzo, e desti nel lettore tanto interesse senza appagarlo, che quel Don Abbondio si faccia più disprezzare per la sua viltà che amare per l'amenità del suo carattere, che quel Renzo e quella Lucia sieno due amanti terribilmente apati e freddi, giova in parte osservare che il Manzoni volle dipingere gli uomini quali sono, non quali dovrebbero essere, e in ciò fu scrittore profondo e accurato.

As for the charge moved by someone, that the book contains little heart, that the eternal episode of the nun (although very beautiful) damages the novel more than anything else, and arouses in the reader such interest as is not satisfied, that Don Abbondio becomes more disparaged for his cowardice than loved for the agreeableness of his character, that Renzo and Lucia are two terribly apathetic and cold lovers, it is worth in part observing that Manzoni wanted to paint men as they are, not as they should be, and in that he was a profound and accurate writer.

(II: 528-9)

Tarchetti's laconic defense comes off weakly against his detailed statement of the charge, and realism appears very unattractive indeed: it is incapable of representing extreme emotional states and contains ideological contradictions in its representation of the priest Don Abbondio which are symptomatic of its Christian conservatism and bourgeois sentimentality.

Tarchetti recognizes that the canonization of *I promessi sposi* and the numerous translations of contemporary French novels make realism the dominant fictional discourse in Italy, but he concludes that Italian culture is suffering from a 'decadenza' ('decadence') partly maintained by the translation patterns of Italian publishers (II: 535). He argues that the French novels

che vengono tradotti e pubblicati dai nostri editori, sono generalmente tali libri che godono di nessuna o pochissima reputazione in Francia [e] tranne alcune poche eccezioni, la loro speculazione si è tuttor rivolta alla diffusione di romanzi osceni.

which are translated and issued by our publishers, are generally such books as enjoy no or little reputation in France [and] with very few exceptions, their investment is always aimed at the circulation of obscene novels.

(II: 532)

Tarchetti singles out French novelists like the prolific Charles-Paul de Kock (1794-1871), whose sentimental, titillating realism enjoyed enormous popularity in Italy. Italian translations of over sixty novels by de Kock were published between 1847 and 1865, bearing titles like *La moglie, il marito e l'amante* (*The Wife, The Husband and The Lover* [1853]) and *Il cornuto* (*The Cuckold* [1854]); some of these novels appeared in different translations a few years apart from various publishers, showing that the Italian publishing industry was scrambling to exploit de Kock's marketability.<sup>10</sup> Tarchetti is most concerned about the social and political implications of these cultural developments, which he finally brands retrograde:

Non si voglia dimenticare che l'Italia, unica al mondo, possiede una guida per le case di tolleranza, che i nostri romanzi licenziosi sono riprodotti e popolari anche in Francia, che gli uomini che li scrissero godono di tutti i diritti civili e dell'ammirazione pubblica, e che apparatengono in gran parte alla stampa periodica [mentre] ogni scritto politico avverso ai principi del governo, ma conforme a quelli dell'umanità e del progresso, è tosto impedito nella sua diffusione.

It must not be forgotten that Italy, unique in the world, possesses a



guide to brothels, that our licentious novels are reproduced and popular in France as well, that the men who write them enjoy every civil right and public admiration, and belong for the most part to the periodical press [whereas] the circulation of every political text opposed to the principles of the government, but consistent with those of humanity and progress, is immediately obstructed.

(II: 534-5)

Tarchetti's experiments with the fantastic can be seen as an intervention into this cultural situation: they were developed to resolve the crisis he diagnosed in Italian fictional discourse, the inadequacy of realism to serve a democratic cultural politics. The fantastic answers Tarchetti's call for a fiction to represent that 'marvelous world' of 'sensations' which he saw as a remedy for hierarchical social relations and his own social isolation; the freeing of subjectivity in fantastic discourse is a freedom from subjection. Because, in Tarchetti's view, realism dominates Italian fiction to no politically progressive end, his intervention takes the form of writing in a foreign genre which displaces realism, the Gothic tale. Tarchetti's effort to write against the Manzonian grain in fact projects a revision of the history of fiction, in which the novel does not originate in Europe, but in 'l'oriente da cui si diffuse dapprima la civiltà per tutto il mondo / the Orient, from which civilization spread throughout the world' (II: 524). And the prototype of the novel becomes, not epic or any form of realist discourse, but fantasy, not the Bible or *The Iliad*, but *The Arabian Nights*:

I Persiani e gli Arabi attinsero dalla varietà della loro vita nomade, e dalla loro vergine natura, e dal loro cielo infuocato le prime narrazioni romanzesche, onde le leggi e le abitudini di comunanza sociale e domestica degli Arabi ci sono note e famigliari da gran tempo, e Strabone si doleva che l'amore del meraviglioso rendesse incerte le storie di queste nazioni.

The Persians and the Arabs drew from the variety of their nomad life, and from their virgin nature, and from their burning sky the first novelistic narratives, hence the laws and customs of the Arabs' social and domestic community have been well known and familiar to us for a long time, and Strabo lamented that love for the marvelous rendered uncertain the histories of these nations.

(II: 524)

Tarchetti's Orientalist literary history clarifies the political agenda in his use of the fantastic, but simultaneously discloses an ideological contradiction which runs counter to that agenda. The passage shows him actively rewriting his cultural materials so as to transform the Orient into

a vehicle for his democratic social vision: whereas the Arabian tales actually offer glimpses of despotic monarchies, and the geographer Strabo describes the nomadic Arabs as 'a tribe of brigands and shepherds' who are less 'civilised' than the Syrians because their 'government' is not as well 'organised,'<sup>11</sup> Tarchetti draws on Rousseau's notion of natural human innocence and perceives only a utopian 'comunanza,' a community or fellowship, close to 'virgin nature' and not corrupted by the hierarchical social organization of Europe. Tarchetti also represents the Orient as exotic and phantasmagorical ('their burning sky,' 'love for the marvelous'), setting his concept of fiction apart from the realist discourse that dominates Italy by valorizing its other, the fantastic. Both these representations of the Orient, however, are clearly Eurocentric: they aim to make Persia and Arabia perform a European function, the regeneration of Italian fiction and society, and they never escape the racist opposition between Western rationality and Eastern irrationality. Tarchetti's literary history assumes the range of meanings which, as Edward Said observes, typify romantic representations of the Orient: 'sensuality, promise, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure, intense energy.'<sup>12</sup>

This racial ideology, obviously in conflict with Tarchetti's democratic politics, becomes more explicitly damaging to his project in his closing reference to Strabo, which abruptly reverses the logic of his argument. Tarchetti initially treats Arabian narratives as a mirror of the Arabian social order, a reliable representation of its 'laws and customs,' but he concludes in apparent agreement with Strabo's complaint that these texts reflect little more than an overheated imagination. Tarchetti's typically romantic Orientalism seems to result in an uncritical acceptance of Strabo's equation of the East with 'love for the marvelous.' Yet Strabo's point that the 'histories' of Eastern countries lack a firm basis in reality renders 'uncertain,' not only Arabian narratives, but the democratic images that Tarchetti finds in them, putting into question his earlier treatment of the novel as figuring a 'marvelous world' without social hierarchies. Tarchetti's citation of Strabo suggests that the utopian world of the novel may be no more than a misrepresentation of its social situation, especially in the case of the Eastern prototypes of the genre. It is worth noting that Tarchetti in effect reiterates this view at the end of his brief tale, 'La fortuna di capitano Gubart' ('Captain Gubart's Fortune'), published the same year as his essay on the novel. After demonstrating the arbitrariness of class distinctions by relating how a poor street musician is mistakenly awarded a royal military commission, the narrator concludes: 'Questo fatto comunque abbia una decisa analogia con quelli famosi delle novelle arabe, è incontrastabilmente vero e conosciuto / This incident, despite its decided resemblance to those famous ones in the Arabian tales, is indisputably true and well known' (1: 79). This reference to *The Arabian Nights* seems designed to satirize Italian social relations

as fantastic and therefore irrational, but it can make this satiric thrust only by assuming the irrationality of Eastern culture and by distinguishing Tarchetti's narrative as 'true.' Tarchetti seeks to enlist foreign fantastic texts in the democratic cultural politics he is conducting in Italy, but his Orientalism is implicated in the key binary opposition by which Europe subordinates, and justifies its colonization of, the same foreign countries whose texts he considers politically useful.

Given the diverse linguistic, cultural, and ideological materials which constitute Tarchetti's project, it can be seen as what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call a minor utilization of a major language:

Even when it is unique a language remains a mixture, a schizophrenic mélange, a Harlequin costume in which very different functions of language and distinct centers of power are played out, blurring what can be said and what can't be said; one function will be played off against the other, all the degrees of territoriality and relative deterritorialization will be played out. Even when major, a language is open to an intensive utilization that makes it take flight along creative lines of escape which, no matter how slowly, no matter how cautiously, can now form an absolute deterritorialization.<sup>13</sup>

The major language which Tarchetti confronted is the Tuscan dialect of Italian, the linguistic standard for Italian literature since the Renaissance. In 1840, after more than a decade of research into the question of a national language, Manzoni published an extensive revision of the first version of *I promessi sposi* which recast it in the Tuscan dialect, undertaking the nationalist project of unifying Italy through its language and literature, at once situating his text in the Italian literary canon and establishing a linguistic model for fiction which could be understood by most Italian readers.<sup>14</sup> Because Tarchetti's fantastic narratives are written in the Tuscan dialect, they take the major language on a line of escape which deterritorializes the dominant fictional discourse. He uses the Italian literary standard to produce Gothic tales, a genre which is not merely marginal in relation to realism, but which exists in Italian culture primarily as translations of foreign writers, namely Hoffmann, Poe, and Adelbert von Chamisso.<sup>15</sup> Traced with German, English, French, even Arabic texts, Tarchetti's tales foreground what realism represses, the discursive and ideological determinations of subjectivity. In his foreign-derived, fantastic narratives, the standard dialect is turned into a political arena where the bourgeois individualism of realist discourse is contested in order to interrogate various class, gender, and racial ideologies. Nevertheless, Tarchetti's Orientalism shows that he does not have his cultural politics entirely under control: his interrogations are democratically directed, but they

sometimes repress the ideological contradictions precipitated by their own materials and methods of appropriating them.

## II

Methods of cultural appropriation like translation would clearly be useful to Tarchetti's project of putting the major language to minor uses. Indeed, his most intensive utilization of the standard dialect occurs in his translation of a foreign fantastic narrative, an English Gothic tale written by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. The political significance of Tarchetti's translation, however, is complicated by the fact that it is a plagiarism of the English text.

In 1865, Tarchetti published a tale entitled 'Il mortale immortale (dall'inglese)' ('The Immortal Mortal [From the English]') in the *Rivista minima* in two installments, on 21 June and 31 August. The first installment was unsigned; the second bore his name. These appearances indicate Tarchetti's authorship, and so Italian readers have always assumed, none venturing beyond the supposition that he adapted the fantastic motif of his tale, the elixir of immortality, from two French texts. What Tarchetti actually published, however, is his Italian translation of Shelley's tale 'The Mortal Immortal,' which was first published in the English literary annual *The Keepsake* in 1833.<sup>16</sup> In 1868, Tarchetti had another opportunity to acknowledge his translation, but he did not: while serving as the editor of the periodical *Emporio pittoresco*, he reprinted it under his name with a different title, 'L'elixir dell'immortalità (imitazione dall'inglese)' ('The Elixir of Immortality [An Imitation from the English]').

Tarchetti's use of parenthetical subtitles ('From the English,' 'An Imitation from the English') appears to glance at the actual nature of his text, but this is misleading: they offer only the vaguest indication of the relationship between his Italian version and Shelley's tale. Tarchetti does introduce some significant changes: he alters a date, uses different names for two main characters, omits a few phrases and sentences, and adds some of his own, all of which amount to a strong transformation of the English text. Nevertheless, in sentence after sentence, paragraph after paragraph, his Italian version is governed by the aim of reproduction: it adheres so closely to the syntactical and lexical features of Shelley's English as to be less an 'imitation' than an interlingual translation. By failing to acknowledge his text as a translation, Tarchetti asserted his authorship of Shelley's material and therefore committed plagiarism. And it seems certain that he was fully aware of this fact. In 1865, he began a brief but intense period of activity in the burgeoning Milanese publishing industry, first printing his short fiction and serializing his novels in the periodical press, and then issuing them in book form with

several large publishers. He was also employed to write book-length translations. In 1869, he published his Italian versions of two English novels, one of which was Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* (1865). In both cases, he was credited as the translator.<sup>17</sup>

Tarchetti's financial difficulties no doubt figured into his motives to plagiarize Shelley's tale. The frenzied pace of his writing during the last four years of his life demonstrates that he was producing for immediate publication and payment. A memoir by his friend and collaborator Salvatore Farina shows Tarchetti drifting from one address to another, writing for several periodicals and publishers at once, but constantly poor, shabbily dressed, ill – he died of typhus and tuberculosis.<sup>18</sup> In a letter dated 31 January 1867, Tarchetti complains to Farina about

le mie solite complicazioni economiche . . . che ho nulla al mondo, che devo pensare da oggi a domani come pranzare, come vestirmi, come ricoverarmi

my usual economic complications . . . that I have nothing in the world, that from one day to the next I must find some way to dine, to dress, to house myself.

(pp. 37, 38)

The letter refers to Tarchetti's antimilitaristic novel *Una nobile follia*, which was currently being serialized in the periodical *Il sole* (November 1866 to March 1867): 'aspetto sempre la completazione di quei drammi dai quali posso avere un po' di danaro / every day I expect to finish these dramas [from the military life] which should yield me a little money' (p. 39).

Farina's memoir suggests a financial motive for Tarchetti's plagiarism by relating an incident in which his knowledge of English becomes the pretext of a fraudulent scheme. Living for some weeks in a hotel in Parma, but unable to pay the bill, Tarchetti 's'improvvisò professore di lingua inglese / posed as a professor of English' and

annunziò per la via delle gazette e alle cantonate di tutte le vie di Parma che, trovandosi di passaggio in quella città, avrebbe dato un corso completo di quaranta lezioni per insegnare la lingua inglese con un suo metodo spicciativo.

announced in the newspapers and on every street corner of Parma that since he was travelling through the city, he would give a complete, forty-lesson course in the English language with his rapid method.

(pp. 34, 35)

Farina's rather melodramatic memoir seems to be unduly minimizing Tarchetti's proficiency in English by limiting it to 'pochissimo, appena il tanto da intendere alla meglio Shakespeare e Byrone e tradurre ad

orecchio Dyckens / very little, just enough to attain a rudimentary understanding of Shakespeare and Byron and to translate Dickens by ear' (p. 34). Tarchetti's translation of Shelley's tale confirms, on the contrary, that he had an excellent reading knowledge of English. All the same, this does not necessarily disprove Farina's assertion that 'non parlava inglese affatto e sarebbe stato imbarazzato a sostenere una conversazione / he did not speak English at all and would have been embarrassed to sustain a conversation' (p. 34). Farina notes that the registration for the course netted 'una retata magnifica / a magnificent haul' (p. 35), but Tarchetti gave much fewer than forty lessons:

quando il professore non seppe più che cosa insegnare ai suoi scolari, lessero insieme Shakespeare e Byrone e fumarono le sigarette che Iginio preparava sul tavolino all'ora della lezione.

when the professor no longer knew what to teach his pupils, together they read Shakespeare and Byron and smoked the cigarettes Iginio put out on the desk when the lesson began.

(p. 36)

This teaching scam was probably more profitable than Tarchetti's plagiarism. Yet since translation was poorly remunerated in nineteenth-century Italy, with payment usually taking the form of books as well as money, his implicit claim that his text was his creation would have earned him a higher fee than if he had published it as a translation.<sup>19</sup> A financial motive may also explain the curious retitling and reprinting of the text when he took over the editorship of the *Emporio pittoresco*. The different title and his signature claimed that it was his original tale being published for the first time.

Because the legal status of translation was just beginning to be defined in 1865, Tarchetti's plagiarism did not in fact constitute a copyright infringement which resulted in a financial loss for Shelley's estate and her English publisher. By the early nineteenth century, many countries had developed copyright statutes which gave the author exclusive control over the reproduction of her text for life and beyond. But international copyright conventions were slow to emerge, and translation rights were not always reserved for the author. In 1853, for example, a federal court in the United States held that a German translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which had not been licensed by Harriet Beecher Stowe, did not infringe her copyright for the English-language text.<sup>20</sup> Although England instituted the first important copyright statute at the beginning of the eighteenth century, in 1851, the year of Shelley's death, British law did not give the author translation rights. It was not until 1852 that the right of authors to license translations of their published texts was recognized by statute, which limited it to five years from the date of

publication.<sup>21</sup> A general copyright law was not formulated in Italy until the Unification: on 25 June 1865, four days after Tarchetti published the first installment of his translation as his tale, the Italian government gave authors the right to 'publish, reproduce, and translate' their texts, although the translation rights were limited to ten years from the date of publication.<sup>22</sup>

Tarchetti's plagiarism is not so much a copyright infringement as a violation of the individualistic notion of authorship on which copyright is based. As Martha Woodmansee shows, copyright laws recognize the writer's ownership of a text insofar as he is its author or originator - 'that is, insofar as his work is new and original, an intellectual creation which owes its individuality solely and exclusively to him.'<sup>23</sup> The notion of authorship thus assumes romantic expressive theory: the text is seen as expressing the unique thoughts and feelings of the writer, a free, unified consciousness which is not divided by determinations that exceed and possibly conflict with his intention. The author is assigned the sole and exclusive copyright because his subjectivity is taken to be a metaphysical essence which is present in his text and all its copies, but which transcends any difference or change introduced by formal determinations, like printing and binding, language and genre, and by economic and political conditions, like the publishing industry and government censorship. The very idea of authorial copyright, however, confesses the possibility of change because it is designed to control the form and marketing of the book by licensing reproduction and repressing change which is not authorized. Copyright opens up a contradiction in the notion of authorship by demonstrating that such law is suspended between metaphysics and materialism, acknowledging the material contingencies of form, the possibility of its difference from the author, but enacting its transparency with the metaphysical assumption of authorial presence.

Tarchetti's plagiarism violates authorship not by merely copying Shelley's tale, but by translating it. Because his plagiarism is a translation, it introduces a decisive change in the form of the original, specifically in its language; his assertion of authorship simultaneously masks this change and indicates that it is decisive enough to mark the creation of a new text which originates with him. Tarchetti's plagiarism covertly collapses the distinction which the notion of authorship draws between author and translator, creator and imitator. Yet because his plagiarism remained undiscovered and unrationalized, at least until today, it continued to support this distinction; it did not reflect or contribute to any revision of nineteenth-century Italian opinion concerning the aesthetic and legal status of translation. All the same, the fact that Tarchetti's plagiarism was covert does not in any way mitigate its violation of authorship. Because his Italian text involves plagiarism as well as translation, it is especially subversive of bourgeois values in the

major language. On the one hand, Tarchetti's text flouts bourgeois propriety and property by fraudulently exploiting the process of literary commodification in the Italian publishing industry; in this way, his plagiarism exemplifies the nonconformist tendency of the *scapigliatura* to identify with socially dominated or marginal groups, particularly the poor and the criminal.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Tarchetti's text can deterritorialize the bourgeois fictional discourse which dominates Italian culture precisely because it is a plagiarism in the standard dialect, because it passes itself off not just as an original Gothic tale, but as one written originally in the Italian of Manzonian realism.

Yet Shelley's authorship comes back to worry the ideological standpoint of Tarchetti's intervention by raising the issue of gender. To be effective as a subversion of bourgeois values which deterritorializes the Italian literary standard, his text must maintain the fiction of his authorship, referring to Shelley's tale only in the vaguest way ('imitation'). At the same time, however, this fiction suppresses an instance of female authorship, so that the theft of Shelley's literary creation has the patriarchal effect of female disempowerment, of limiting a woman's social agency. This would seem to be a consequence which Tarchetti did not anticipate: some of his other fiction explicitly addresses male domination of women and the social construction of gender, whether in the graphic depiction of Paolina's oppression or in the gender dislocations of his fantastic experiments.<sup>25</sup> Most importantly, the tale he chose to plagiarize interrogates patriarchal images of male power and female weakness. Grounded in an antifeminist suppression of Shelley's authorship, Tarchetti's plagiarism nonetheless circulates her feminist fictional project in Italian culture. This ideological contradiction is further complicated by the fact that Tarchetti's text is a translation. In order for Shelley's tale to perform its political function in a different culture, it must undergo a radical transformation which is simultaneously faithful and abusive, which both reproduces and supplements the English text. The clearest indication of this uneven relationship appears in the subtle differences introduced by the Italian version: they question the class and racial ideologies which inform Shelley's tale.

### III

Shelley's 'The Mortal Immortal' is a first-person narrative in which an assistant to the sixteenth-century alchemist Cornelius Agrippa laments drinking the elixir of immortality. The opening sentence provokes the distinctive hesitation of the fantastic by citing a date which glances at the English reader's reality before suddenly establishing an unreal chronology: 'July 16, 1833. - This is a memorable anniversary for me; on it I complete my three hundred and twenty-third year!' (p. 219). The text



aims to suspend the reader between the two registers of fantastic discourse, the mimetic and the marvelous, by representing the circumstances surrounding the assistant's fateful action, particularly his relationship with the woman he loves and ultimately marries. The fantastic premise of immortality leads to a number of satirical exaggerations by which patriarchal gender representations are thrown into confusion.

By assigning the immortality to a male narrator, Shelley's text turns it into a fantastic trope for male power, initiating a critique of patriarchy which resembles Mary Wollstonecraft's. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Wollstonecraft argues that the 'bodily strength [which] seems to give man a natural superiority over woman . . . is the only solid basis on which the superiority of the sex can be built' (p. 124).<sup>26</sup> Shelley's fantastic narrative questions male physical superiority by setting up the assistant as the unstable position from which the action becomes intelligible. There is doubt about whether he is in fact physically superior. His 'story' is framed by the fundamental question, 'Am I immortal?' (pp. 219, 229), and interrupted by several inconclusive meditations on the authenticity and effectiveness of Cornelius' elixir. The value of male physical superiority is unsettled by the assistant's contradictory representation of the alchemical science which may have made him immortal. At first, alchemy is stigmatized as unnatural and heretical. We hear the 'report' of the 'accident' involving Cornelius' 'scholar, who, unawares, raised the foul fiend during his master's absence and was destroyed,' with the result that 'all his scholars at once deserted him,' and 'the dark spirits laughed at him for not being able to retain a single mortal in his service' (pp. 219-20). The assistant seems to accept this association of alchemy with witchcraft: 'when Cornelius came and offered me a purse of gold if I would remain under his roof, I felt as if Satan himself tempted me' (p. 220). In the midst of this passage, however, he drops the suggestion that the 'report' may be 'true or false' (p. 219); and later in the narrative, after Cornelius dies, this skepticism reappears to exculpate the alchemist - and reinforce the doubt concerning the assistant's immortality: 'I derided the notion that he could command the powers of darkness, and laughed at the superstitious fears with which he was regarded by the vulgar. He was a wise philosopher, but had no acquaintance with any spirits but those clad in flesh and blood' (p. 226).

The uncertainty which Shelley's text generates about male physical superiority is maintained by the characterization of the assistant. He is a weak, vacillating figure, dominated by the woman he loves, at times ridiculous, a most unlikely candidate for immortality. His name is 'Winzy,' which, as Charles Robinson observes, is related to 'winze,' the Scottish word for 'curse,' but which also 'might suggest that the protagonist of this story is a comic character.'<sup>27</sup> After listening to his friends' 'dire tale' of the 'accident,' Winzy's reaction to Cornelius' offer of

employment is sheer slapstick: 'My teeth chattered - my hair stood on end: - I ran off as fast as my trembling knees would permit' (p. 200). Winzy's characterization satirizes the ideological basis of patriarchy in biological determinism because his physical superiority is not innate, but an error: he drinks the elixir of immortality only because Cornelius has deceptively told him that it is a philter to cure love. Since part of the comedy in Winzy's character derives from his utter lack of psychological control, the satire also extends to a distinctively bourgeois version of patriarchal ideology, the link between male power and the individualistic concept of the free, unified subject. Winzy's fearful retreat from Cornelius' workshop leaves him with so little presence of mind that he lapses into poverty and must be browbeaten by his love Bertha in order to return to work: 'Thus encouraged - shamed by her - led on by love and hope, laughing at my late fears, with quick steps and a light heart, I returned to accept the offers of the alchymist, and was instantly installed in my office' (pp. 220-1). Because Winzy is so submissive to Bertha, so cowered by the fear of her rejection, he endures her 'inconstancy' and can gain the 'courage and resolution' to act only when he is deceived that the potion he drinks cures him of his unhappy love (pp. 221, 224). Winzy never possesses the inner autonomy of male power; he is in fact a man who does not want any power, who by the end of his narrative deeply regrets his longevity.

Shelley's tale follows Wollstonecraft's feminist critique most closely in the characterization of Bertha. Just as Wollstonecraft found male domination most oppressive of women in the affluent classes because 'the education of the rich tends to render them vain and helpless' (p. 81), so Shelley's text marks an unfortunate change in Bertha when her parents die and she is adopted by 'the old lady of the near castle, rich, childless, and solitary' (p. 220). Living in the aristocratic splendor of a 'marble palace' and 'surrounded by silk-clad youths - the rich and gay,' Bertha becomes 'somewhat of a coquette in manner,' and her relationship with the poor Winzy is endangered (pp. 220-1). Women develop 'coquettish arts,' Wollstonecraft argues, because they assimilate the patriarchal image of themselves as the passive object of male desire: 'only taught to please, women are always on the watch to please, and with true heroic ardour endeavor to gain hearts merely to resign or spurn them when the victory is decided and conspicuous' (pp. 115, 147). Hence, Bertha's change is manifested in her devious and perverse manipulation of Winzy:

Bertha fancied that love and security were enemies, and her pleasure was to divide them in my bosom. . . . She slighted me in a thousand ways, yet would never acknowledge herself to be in the wrong. She would drive me mad with anger, and then force me to beg her pardon. Sometimes she fancied that I was not sufficiently submis-

sive, and then she had some story of a rival, favoured by her protectress.

(p. 221)

As this catalog of abuse suggests, Shelley's tale satirizes the patriarchal image of woman which shapes Bertha's characterization by transforming it into caricature. The fantastic premise of immortality results in an exaggeration of her vanity: as Winzy remains 20 years old and she becomes a 'faded beauty' of 50, 'she sought to decrease the apparent disparity of our ages by a thousand feminine arts - rouge, youthful dress, and assumed juvenility of manner' (pp. 226, 228). The constant concern with beauty which patriarchy forces on women in Wollstonecraft's critique is magnified into Bertha's ludicrous, maddening obsession: 'Her jealousy never slept,' Winzy relates,

Her chief occupation was to discover that, in spite of outward appearances, I was myself growing old. . . . She would discern wrinkles in my face and decrepitude in my walk, while I bounded along in youthful vigour, the youngest looking of twenty youths. I never dared address another woman: on one occasion, fancying that the belle of the village regarded me with favouring eyes, she bought me a gray wig.

(p. 228)

Unable to maintain her attractive appearance, Bertha even goes so far as to disparage youth and beauty:

she described how much more comely gray hairs were than my chestnut locks; she descanted on the reverence and respect due to age - how preferable to the slight regard paid to children: could I imagine that the despicable gifts of youth and good looks outweighed disgrace, hatred, and scorn?

(p. 227)

Tarchetti's 'L'elixir dell'immortalità' is a rather close translation which perfectly catches the humor of Shelley's feminist satire, but he also makes revisions which go beyond the English text.<sup>28</sup> Some of the revisions suggest a strategy of amplification designed to increase the epistemological confusion of the fantastic for the Italian reader. Thus, the translation heightens the marvelous register of Shelley's fantastic discourse by adding a strong tendency toward sensationalism. Tarchetti follows the English by initiating the fantastic hesitation in the first sentence, with a date which glances at the Italian reader's reality, yet he inserts slight changes which intensify the narrator's amazement:

Dicembre 16, 1867. - È questo per me un anniversario *assai* memorabile. Io compio oggi il mio trecentoventinovesimo anno *di vita*.

This is a *very* memorable anniversary for me. Today I complete my three hundred and twenty-ninth year of *life*.

(1: 114)

Winzy's first expression of doubt about his physical superiority is the simple question, 'Am I, then, immortal?' (p. 219), whereas the Italian version resorts to a more emphatic restatement: '*Ma non invecchierò io dunque? Sono io dunque realmente immortale? / But shall I not age, then? Am I, then, really immortal?*' (1: 114). Sometimes the amplification produces a melodramatic effect: 'belief' and 'thought' (p. 226) are inflated into the more stagy 'illusione' and 'dubbio' ('dream,' 'suspicion' [1: 126]); 'sad' (p. 224) is rendered by 'pazza' ('mad' [1: 124]), 'fondly' – as in 'my Bertha, whom I had loved so fondly' (p. 228) – by 'pazzamente' ('madly' [1: 129]). And sometimes the melodrama tips into the marvelous. When the aged Bertha tries to salve her wounded vanity by telling Winzy that 'though I looked so young, there was ruin at work within my frame,' the Italian version turns the 'ruin' into a preternaturally abrupt process: 'quantunque io apparissi così giovane, eravi qualche cosa in me che m'avrebbe fatto *invecchiare repentemente* / although I looked so young, there was something in me which would make me age *all of sudden*' (1: 130).

At other points, Tarchetti's translation increases the Italian reader's epistemological confusion by strengthening the mimetic register of Shelley's fantastic discourse. The main characters are rechristened Vincenzo and Ortensia, two quite ordinary Italian names which remove the comic improbability suggested by an immortal called Winzy. Tarchetti's strategy of mimetic amplification works by accumulating verisimilar details and explanations. When Vincenzo recounts the tragedy of Cornelius' 'allievo che avendo inavvertentemente evocato durante l'assenza del maestro, uno spirito maligno, ne fu ucciso / pupil who having inadvertently raised a malign spirit in his master's absence was killed by it'), he adds another detail to the English passage to make the incident more plausible: 'senza che alcuno avesse potuto soccorrerlo / before anyone could come to his aid' (1: 115). The Italian version similarly enhances the psychological realism of the English text. When Winzy and Bertha part after their first falling out, he tersely states that 'we met now after an absence, and she had been sorely beset while I was away' (p. 220). In the translation, however, the meeting is much more histrionic, with Vincenzo physically expressing his passion for Ortensia and emphasizing the distress caused by their separation:

*Io la riabbracciava ora dopo un'assenza assai dolorosa; il bisogno di confidenza e di conforti mi aveva ricondotto presso di lei. La fanciulla non aveva sofferto meno di me durante la mia lontananza.*

*I embraced her again now after a very painful absence; the need for intimacy and comfort led me back to her. The girl had not suffered less than me during my distance.*

(I: 117)

Because the translation tends to favor extreme emotional states, this sort of mimetic amplification can easily turn a relatively realistic English passage into overwrought fantasy. When Winzy fearfully runs away from the allegedly satanic Cornelius, he turns to Bertha for consolation: 'My failing steps were directed whither for two years they had every evening been attracted, - a gently bubbling spring of pure living waters, beside which lingered a dark-haired girl' (p. 220). The Italian version infuses the landscape and the girl with Gothic overtones:

*I miei passi si diressero anche quella volta a quel luogo, a cui pel giro di due anni erano stati diretti ogni sera, - un luogo pieno d'incanti, una sterminata latitudine di praterie, con una sorgente d'acqua viva che scaturiva gorgogliando malinconicamente, e presso la quale sedeva con abbandono una fanciulla.*

*My steps were directed that time as well toward that place, where for a period of two years they had been directed every evening, - a place full of enchantments, a boundless expanse of grassland, with a fountain of living water which gushed with a melancholy gurgling, and beside which sat a girl with abandon.*

(I: 116)

Tarchetti's strategy of amplification effectively reproduces Shelley's feminist critique by further exaggerating the patriarchal gender images which shape the characters. When Winzy drinks what he mistakenly assumes is a remedy for his frustrated love of Bertha, he experiences a sudden fit of self-esteem and daring which comically confirms his psychological weakness, thus continuing the satire of male power: 'methought my good looks had wonderfully improved. I hurried beyond the precincts of the town, joy in my soul, the beauty of heaven and earth around me' (p. 223). The Italian version turns Vincenzo into a parody of the romantic individual, narcissistic, chest-thumping, Byronic:

*parvemi che i miei occhi, già così ingenui, avessero acquistata una sorprendente espressione. Mi cacciai fuori del recinto della città colla gioia nell'anima, con quella orgogliosa soddisfazione che mi dava il pensiero di essere presto vendicato.*

*it seemed to me that my eyes, previously so ingenuous, had acquired a striking expression. I dashed beyond the city limit with joy in my heart, with that proud satisfaction which made me think that I would soon be avenged.*

(I: 122)

The translation likewise accentuates the caricature of female vanity. Whereas Winzy observes that his youthfulness drove Bertha to find 'compensation for her misfortunes in a variety of little ridiculous circumstances' (p. 228), Ortensia is said to revert to '*puerili* e ridicole circostanze / *childish* and ridiculous circumstances' (1: 129). And whereas Winzy states that Bertha 'would discern wrinkles in my face and decrepitude in my walk' (p. 228), Vincenzo complains that Ortensia '*struggeasi* di scoprire delle grinze sul mio viso, e qualche cosa di *esitante*, di decrepito nel mio incesso / was *consumed* with discovering wrinkles in my face, and something *hesitant*, decrepit in my gait' (1: 130).

Tarchetti's first decisive departure from the ideological determinations of Shelley's tale occurs on the issue of class. Shelley challenges the patriarchal assumption that gender identity is biologically fixed by indicating that Bertha's transformation into a coquette is socially determined, an effect of her upward mobility. Bertha's class position is evidently bourgeois: 'her parents, like mine,' states Winzy, 'were of humble life, yet respectable' (p. 220). This 'life' should be seen as bourgeois even though 'humble,' not only because it is labelled 'respectable,' but because it enables Winzy to be apprenticed to an alchemist with whom he earns 'no insignificant sum of money' (p. 221). Bertha and Winzy are 'humble' in relation to her protectress, who is an aristocrat, a 'lady' living in a feudal 'castle.' Shelley's tale thus begins by associating patriarchy with aristocratic domination, sexual equality with the bourgeois family. This is most clear in a striking passage which derives directly from Wollstonecraft's treatise. When Bertha finally leaves her aristocratic protectress and returns to Winzy's parents, he asserts that she 'escaped from a gilt cage to nature and liberty' (p. 224), echoing one of Wollstonecraft's metaphors for the self-oppression to which patriarchal ideology subjects women: 'Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adore its prison' (p. 131).

As the narrative unfolds, however, the class logic of Shelley's feminist critique is undone. Although Winzy's attack on the aristocratic protectress implicitly equates the bourgeois family with a natural state free of patriarchal gender representations, his own marriage to Bertha compels her to live them out in an even more obsessive way. They continue to be financially independent: Winzy refers to 'my farm' (p. 227), and although at one point 'poverty had made itself felt' because his perpetual youthfulness caused them to be 'universally shunned,' they are nonetheless able to sell off their 'property' and emigrate to France, having 'realised a sum sufficient, at least, to maintain us while Bertha lived' (p. 228). Thus, whether living with their parents or on their own, after they are married,

they continue to lead a 'humble life, yet respectable.' But their relationship can hardly be considered 'nature and liberty' for either of them. Bertha becomes the passive object of Winzy's desire:

We had no children; we were all in all to each other; and though, as she grew older, her vivacious spirit became a little allied to ill-temper, and her beauty sadly diminished, I cherished her in my heart as the mistress I had idolized, the wife I had sought with such perfect love.

(p. 227)

And when Bertha's vanity drives her to ridiculous, alienating extremes, Winzy helplessly acknowledges the gender hierarchy established by his physical superiority: 'this mincing, simpering, jealous old woman. I should have revered her gray locks and withered cheeks; but thus! - It was my work, I knew; but I did not the less deplore this type of human weakness' (p. 228). Bertha's return to the bourgeoisie ultimately contradicts Winzy's attack on the protectress: their marriage shows that the bourgeois family is not an egalitarian refuge from aristocratic patriarchy, but a continuation of male dominance.

This ideological contradiction lies at the center of Shelley's feminism. As Anne Mellor has argued,

Mary Shelley was a feminist in the sense that her mother was, in that she advocated an egalitarian marriage and the education of women. But insofar as she endorsed the continued reproduction of the bourgeois family, her feminism is qualified by the ways in which her affirmation of the bourgeois family entails an acceptance of its intrinsic hierarchy, a hierarchy historically manifested in the doctrine of separate spheres [and] in the domination of the male gender.<sup>29</sup>

Shelley's characteristic valorization of marriage emerges in 'The Mortal Immortal' primarily because Winzy is the narrator: he makes his love for Bertha and their marriage the positions from which their actions are intelligible, and hence the bourgeois family, with its patriarchal construction of gender, is established as the standard by which they are judged. What the text imposes as true or obvious is that Winzy is the devoted lover and husband, attending to their material needs, controlling their destiny in the public sphere, whereas Bertha controls their private life, compelled by her vanity to trifle with his affection, envy his youthfulness, even threaten their lives. Reasoning that Winzy's unchanging appearance could get them executed 'as a dealer in the black art' and his 'accomplice[,] at last she insinuated that I must share my secret with her, and bestow on her like benefits to those I myself enjoyed, or she would denounce me - and then she burst into tears' (p. 227).

Tarchetti's translation probes the contradictions of Shelley's feminism by subtly revising the ideologies her tale puts to work. The Italian follows the English in having Vincenzo assert that 'io divenni marito di Ortensia / I became Ortensia's husband' (I: 123), but it repeatedly omits signs of their marriage. When Bertha becomes aware of Winzy's immortality, he renews his conjugal vows to her: 'I will be your true, faithful husband while you are spared to me, and do my duty to you to the last' (p. 228). Tarchetti deletes this entire statement. And where Winzy and Bertha address each other with 'my poor wife' and 'my husband' (pp. 227, 228), Vincenzo and Ortensia say 'mia buona compagna' and 'mio amico' ('my good companion,' 'my friend' [I: 128]). These changes show an effort to weaken, however slightly, the valorization of marriage in Shelley's tale and perhaps reflect a *scapigliato* rejection of bourgeois respectability. Most significantly, Tarchetti's changes locate the very ideological determination which qualifies Shelley's feminist project, and they do so by emphasizing friendship rather than marriage, hinting at the possibility of an equal relationship between the lovers, questioning the gender hierarchy of the bourgeois family.

At the same time, Tarchetti's translation superimposes another class conflict on the English text. This too requires a diminution of Shelley's bourgeois values. The Italian version reproduces all of those passages which point to the main characters' financial independence – except the most explicit one: the description of Vincenzo's and Ortensia's parents deletes 'respectable' and emphasizes 'humble,' clearly suggesting that they are not bourgeois, but members of the working class: 'I suoi parenti erano, come i miei, di *assai* umile condizione / Her parents were, like mine, of *very* humble rank' (I: 116). Ortensia's adoption by the protectress thus figures patriarchy as aristocratic domination of the working class. The Italian version underscores this representation by encoding Ortensia's vain obsessions with aristocratic attitudes. Whereas Bertha, driven by her envy of Winzy's physical appearance to the paradoxical extreme of disparaging beauty, tells him that 'gray hairs' are 'much more comely,' and that 'youth and good looks' are 'despicable gifts' (p. 227), Ortensia expresses an aristocratic sense of social superiority: the Italian version replaces 'comely' with 'gentili' ('fair,' but also 'polite,' 'noble') and 'despicable' with 'volgari' ('common,' 'unrefined' [I: 127, 128]). With these changes, Tarchetti's translation forces Shelley's tale to address the hierarchical relationship between the aristocracy and the working class, an instance of class domination which her bourgeois feminism represses.

This pressure in the translation to expose forms of ideological mystification also makes itself felt in deletions which remove the Orientalism from Shelley's tale. Tarchetti omits Winzy's response to Bertha's coquettish behavior: 'I was jealous as a Turk' (p. 221). Because any particularly violent or aggressive show of jealousy would be comically



inconsistent with Winzy's submissiveness, his assertion can be seen as contributing to the satire of male power built into his characterization. Yet once the feminist significance of the joke is appreciated, the reader is positioned in another ideology, European Orientalism: the satire becomes intelligible only when the reader thinks that Winzy's jealousy could never possibly be as excessive as a Turk's, i.e., only when the reader assumes the truth of the cliché and thus accepts an ethnic slur, drawing a racist distinction between the West as rational and the East as irrational. Shelley's use of the cliché to support the feminist satire ridicules a gender hierarchy by introducing one based on race.

The absence of this racial ideology from the Italian version might seem insignificant, were it not that Tarchetti omits another, much more complicated Orientalist reference in the English text: an allusion to *The History of Nourjahad*, an Eastern tale written by the eighteenth-century novelist and playwright Frances Sheridan. Near the beginning of Shelley's text, Winzy wistfully cites 'fabled' instances of longevity which proved much more tolerable than his:

I have heard of enchantments, in which the victims were plunged into a deep sleep to wake, after a hundred years, as fresh as ever: I have heard of the Seven Sleepers - thus to be immortal would not be so burthensome; but, oh! the weight of never-ending time - the tedious passage of the still-succeeding hours! How happy was the fabled Nourjahad!

(p. 219)

The extremely elliptical quality of this allusion, especially compared to the explanatory statement which precedes the Seven Sleepers, indicates the enormous popularity of Sheridan's character, even as late as 1833, when Shelley was writing her own tale. Published in 1767, a year after Sheridan's death, *The History of Nourjahad* went through at least eleven British editions by 1830, including an illustrated abridgement for children, and it was twice adapted for the stage, first as a 'melodramatic spectacle' in 1802, then as a musical production in 1813.<sup>30</sup> Having already published several tales in *The Keepsake*, Shelley knew that Eastern motifs were in vogue among its readers; she seems even to have assumed that the 'fabled Nourjahad' was more familiar to them than the rather learned allusion to the Seven Sleepers, and so she needed merely to have her 'mortal immortal' drop the character's name to signify immortality punctuated by 'deep sleep.'<sup>31</sup> Yet, for readers who know *The History of Nourjahad*, the reference is too abrupt and unqualified to stop resonating, so that it constitutes a disturbing point of indeterminacy in Shelley's text, limited only by the cultural and social conditions under which it is read.

Sheridan's Nourjahad is the favorite of the Persian sultan

Schemzeddin, who would like to appoint him as 'first minister' but must establish that he is worthy, innocent of the faults imputed to him by court advisors: 'youth,' 'avarice,' 'love of pleasure,' and 'irreligion' (p. 693). Schemzeddin tests Nourjahad by asking him what he would like if his every desire could be satisfied, and Nourjahad's response confirms the advisors' suspicions:

I should desire to be possessed of inexhaustible riches; and, to enable me to enjoy them to the utmost, to have my life prolonged to eternity, [disregarding] hopes of Paradise [in order to] make a paradise of this earthly globe while it lasted, and take my chance for the other afterwards.

(p. 694)

Nourjahad elicits the sultan's rebuke, and that night he is visited by his 'guardian genius' who fulfills his desire for wealth and immortality, although with the proviso that any vice he commits will be 'punished by total privation of [his] faculties,' lasting 'for months, years, nay for a whole revolution of Saturn at a time, or perhaps for a century' (p. 695). Nourjahad forgets this punishment, further alienates Schemzeddin by devoting himself to 'nothing but giving loose to his appetites' (p. 698), and performs three immoral acts which are each punished by long periods of deep sleep. While indulging himself 'with an unbounded freedom in his most voluptuous wishes,' Nourjahad, 'for the first time, got drunk,' whereupon he sleeps over four years (p. 700); then he invents a 'celestial masquerade' in which he orders 'the women of his seraglio to personate the houris,' while 'he himself would needs represent Mahomet; and one of the mistresses whom he loved best . . . Cadiga, the favourite wife of the great prophet,' for which 'wild and profane idea' he sleeps forty years (p. 705); finally, when his 'appetites palled with abundance,' he begins to delight in 'cruelty' and brutally kills Cadiga, thereafter sleeping twenty years (p. 710). Upon waking Nourjahad reforms and embarks on a vast program of philanthropy, so profoundly regretting his wealth and immortality that his guardian genius reappears to take them away. It is subsequently revealed that Nourjahad's 'adventure . . . was all a deception' (p. 719), he did not actually kill Cadiga, he was never wealthy or immortal, and only fourteen months have passed, not more than sixty years. Schemzeddin had invented everything to bring about his favorite's moral reformation.

Shelley's allusion to Sheridan's tale puts into play several themes dense with ideological significance. Nourjahad appears 'happy' to Winzy, most obviously, because the burden of his immortality was eased by long periods of sleep and finally removed. Yet given Winzy's relationship to Bertha, Nourjahad would also be enviable because he was finally reunited and married to his beloved Mandana, 'a young maid, so

exquisitely charming and accomplished, that he gave her the entire possession of his heart' (p. 698), but was later deceived that she died in childbirth. What distinguished Nourjahad's relationship to Mandana was that he chose her as his confidant - 'longing to unbosom himself to one on whose tenderness and fidelity he could rely, to her he disclosed the marvellous story of his destiny' (p. 698) - thereby exemplifying the eighteenth-century rise of companionate marriage, which stressed domestic friendship, a sharing of affection and interests between the spouses, while maintaining the husband's authority.<sup>32</sup> It was no doubt this antecedent of Shelley's own concept of egalitarian marriage, in addition to the fantastic premise of immortality, that attracted her to Sheridan's tale, especially since it occurs within a narrative that can be read as a critique of patriarchy. For *The History of Nourjahad*, like 'The Mortal Immortal,' questions a patriarchal gender image: Nourjahad represents male physical superiority pushed to destructive extremes of violence against women. Hence, when Winzy compares himself to Nourjahad, Shelley's text signals that it will address gender differences and offers a feminist joke at Winzy's expense to those readers of *The Keepsake* who could make the comparison and shared Wollstonecraft's thinking: the allusion inevitably points to the discrepancy between Winzy's cringing weakness and Nourjahad's potent excess, beginning the satire of male power that is Shelley's theme.

Yet whatever feminist design can be detected in Sheridan's tale is finally skewed by the racial and class ideologies that underwrite it. In interrogating patriarchy, *The History of Nourjahad* is clearly overdetermined by Orientalism: it simultaneously demonstrates and rehabilitates the moral inferiority of the East. Nourjahad's characterization involves the racist procedure of naturalizing ethnic stereotypes, grounding them in biology: 'he was not of an active temper,' 'he was naturally choleric' (pp. 698, 700). And although Islam is treated reverentially, with Nourjahad receiving his most severe punishment for blaspheming the Koran, Sheridan's valorization of marriage is linked to an explicit privileging of the West and to a consistent representation of women as the object of male sexual desire - even in the context of companionate marriage.<sup>33</sup> Thus, Mandana's reciprocation of Nourjahad's love is described as 'a felicity very rare among eastern husbands,' and she is revealed to be Schemzeddin's gift to his favorite, freed from her status as the sultan's 'slave' because she participated in his 'contrivance' by impersonating Nourjahad's guardian genius and later joining his seraglio (pp. 698, 719-20). Insofar as Schemzeddin is responsible for Nourjahad's reformation, moreover, the narrative affirms a specific political institution, a despotic monarchy that relies on paternalistic interventions. The ideological configuration of Sheridan's tale, what can be called an Orientalist image of patriarchal despotism,

jars against the bourgeois feminism that can be read out of Shelley's allusion, forcing Winzy's exclamation to precipitate still more contradictions in her project. 'How happy was the fabled Nourjahad' - that he lived under a despot who exercised absolute power over his subjects? That he dominated his wife as well as the women in his seraglio? That he was a Persian who overcame his Oriental propensity to vice? These potential meanings would have been accessible to many readers of *The Keepsake*: the audience for these expensive giftbooks was largely aristocratic and bourgeois women, politically conservative, accustomed to prose and poetry that was often Orientalist and filled with patriarchal constructions of gender.<sup>34</sup>

Although *The History of Nourjahad* enjoyed some popularity on the continent during the late eighteenth century, when it was translated into French, Russian, and Hungarian, it seems unlikely that Tarchetti knew it. His deletion of any reference to Nourjahad from his translation may have been due merely to his ignorance of Sheridan's tale. He certainly did not remove it because he was aware of and opposed Orientalist stereotypes, since the same racial ideology surfaces elsewhere in his writing, even when he tries to formulate a democratic cultural politics for Italian fiction. Whatever Tarchetti's motive may have been, his deletion necessarily affects both the English text and the Italian translation. The mere absence of the allusion at once isolates a node of ideological contradiction in Shelley's text and erases it, allowing the translation to address class and gender domination in Italy without the burden of racism and despotic monarchy. Yet the absence also points to an antifeminist effect in the translation because of the cultural and social functions that every allusion performs. As Susan Stewart has argued,

the allusive act always bears reference to and creates tradition, [but] it also always bears reference to and creates the situation at hand, articulating the relation between that situation and tradition, and articulating the varying degrees of access available to tradition[.] levels of readership, levels of accessibility to knowledge.<sup>35</sup>

Shelley's allusion to Sheridan's tale not only announces her own project as a feminist critique of patriarchy, but implicitly constructs a tradition of female authorship and feminist ideological critique, even as the revelation of that tradition conceals its contradictory ideological conditions in both writers' texts. Shelley's allusion, furthermore, makes the tradition available to the socially prominent women who read *The Keepsake* and were singled out by Wollstonecraft as most oppressed by patriarchy. Tarchetti's deletion quashes this act of feminist tradition-alization, entirely blocking the Italian reader's access to the tradition it constructs.

## IV

Tarchetti's translation sets up two discontinuous relationships, one with Shelley's tale, the other with Italian culture, which can best be understood with Philip Lewis' concept of abusive fidelity.<sup>36</sup> In this sort of translation, Lewis states, the translator focuses on the 'abuses' of the source-language text, 'points or passages that are in some sense forced, that stand out as clusters of textual energy,' and attempts to reproduce their abusive quality in the target-language culture. The translator's attempt at reproduction, however, simultaneously supplements the source-language text in an interrogative way. This concept of fidelity in translation is abusive because it performs what Lewis calls

a dual function – on the one hand, that of forcing the linguistic and conceptual system of which it is a dependent, and on the other hand, of directing a critical thrust back toward the text that it translates and in relation to which it becomes a kind of unsettling aftermath (it is as if the translation sought to occupy the original's already unsettled home, and thereby, far from 'domesticating' it, to turn it into a place still more foreign to itself).

Lewis seems to regard abusive fidelity as a strategic choice, at least partly within the translator's control ('partly' because the choices are somewhat serendipitous, varying from one source-language text to another, from one target-language culture to another). Yet the foregoing treatment of Tarchetti's translation requires a revision of Lewis' concept to include translation choices that remain unarticulated and unconscious, and that therefore can support an effect exceeding the translator's intention. Any of the translator's moves, in other words, may both reproduce and supplement the source-language text.

Tarchetti's translation, with its formal techniques of marvelous and mimetic amplification, reproduces the key abuse in Shelley's feminist fictional project, her use of the fantastic to dislocate patriarchal gender representations; and because his translation is a plagiarism written in the standard Italian dialect, it deterritorializes the dominant realist discourse in Italy, where it conducts an ideological cultural practice which is radically democratic, which combats class (aristocratic and bourgeois), gender (patriarchal), and racial (Orientalist) ideologies. Tarchetti's translation moves are such that they exhibit this political significance even in instances (e.g. the removal of Shelley's Orientalism) where they seem to be uncalculated, or at least to lack a political calculation. The abusiveness of Tarchetti's translation does not stop with the target-language culture, for it also enacts an 'unsettling' ideological critique of Shelley's tale, exposing the political limitations of her bourgeois feminism, its failure to recognize the gender hierarchy in marriage, and its

complicity with working-class oppression and European racism. The paradox of Tarchetti's translation strategy is that its abuses issue mostly from its manifold fidelities – to the standard Italian dialect, but not the dominant realism; to the syntactical and lexical features, fantastic discourse, and feminist ideology of the English text, but not its bourgeois values and Orientalism. These lacks in Tarchetti's translation are supplied by another fidelity, to a democratic cultural politics.

More specifically, the attention to class in Tarchetti's translation provides one example of how his use of the fantastic was designed to confront the class divisions which were altered but nonetheless maintained in Italy after the Unification. This social transformation was ultimately liberalizing, not democratizing: it freed markets from regional restrictions and encouraged the development of professional, manufacturing, and mercantile interests, particularly in the north, yet without markedly improving the lives of the agrarian and industrial workers who composed the largest segment of the population. On the contrary, the economic reorganization, instead of weakening workers' dependence on landowners and employers, added the uncertainties of market conditions, of higher prices, and taxes. And the institution of a national government with a standing army faced workers with conscription, while their widespread illiteracy hindered their participation in the political process.<sup>37</sup> Tarchetti's translation, like his other fantastic tales, intervenes into these social contradictions, not only by criticizing aristocratic and bourgeois domination of the working class, but also by adopting a fictional discourse which overturns the bourgeois assumptions of realism. He made this intervention, moreover, in the highly politicized cultural formation of the 1860s, publishing his tales in Milanese periodicals which were closely allied to the most progressive, democratic groups and which reached the bourgeoisie who stood to benefit from the economic and political changes in post-Unification Italy.<sup>38</sup>

Yet Tarchetti's reliance on plagiarism to forward his political agenda, as well as his deletion of a literary allusion he probably did not understand, gives a final twist to Lewis' concept of abusive fidelity in translation. Both moves show that the source-language text can cause 'a kind of unsettling aftermath' in the target-language text, indicating points where the latter is 'foreign' to its own project or conflicts with the translator's intention. As soon as Tarchetti's theft is known and his deletion located, Shelley's tale enacts an ideological critique of his translation which reveals that he imported her feminist fiction into Italy by suppressing her authorship and her construction of a feminist tradition. The antifeminist effects of Tarchetti's text constitute an egregious reminder that translation, like every cultural practice, functions under conditions that may to some extent be unacknowledged, but

that nonetheless complicate and perhaps compromise the translator's activity – even when it aims to make a strategic political intervention.

## NOTES

This essay has benefited from the comments of several friends and colleagues: Ann Caesar, Tim Corrigan, Pellegrino D'Acerno, Sally Mitchell, Robert Storey, and Justin Vitiello. A much abbreviated version was delivered at the Modern Language Association Convention in 1990 at the invitation of Gregory Lucente. Part of the research and writing was supported by a Study Leave from Temple University.

- 1 For a concise treatment of the issues raised by the *scapigliatura*, see G. M. Carsaniga, 'Realism in Italy,' in *The Age of Realism*, ed. F. W. J. Hemmings (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), pp. 323–53, especially pp. 335–8.  
My epigraph from Karl Vossler's *Geist und Kultur der Sprache* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1925) appears in André Lefevere, ed. and trans., *Translating Literature: The German Tradition from Luther to Rosenzweig* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977), p. 97.
- 2 Ann Caesar, 'Construction of Character in Tarchetti's *Fosca*,' *Modern Language Review*, 82 (1987): 76–87.
- 3 Gaetano Mariani identifies many of the foreign texts on which Tarchetti's fantastic narratives are based in *Storia della Scapigliatura* (Caltanissetta and Rome: Sciascia, 1967), chap. 7. See also Sergio Rossi, 'E. A. Poe e la Scapigliatura Lombarda,' *Studi americani*, 5 (1959): 119–39. Davide De Camille argues that Tarchetti's novels, especially *Paolina*, imitate Manzoni's *I promessi sposi*: see 'Tarchetti-Manzoni e il problema del romanzo,' in *Il 'Vegliardo' e gli 'Antecristi': Studi su Manzoni e la Scapigliatura*, ed. Renzo Negri (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1978), pp. 128–65.
- 4 Ian Watt has elucidated the philosophical assumptions of realism in *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957), chapter 1.
- 5 Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London and New York: Methuen, 1980), pp. 72, 69.
- 6 Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 41. My treatment of the fantastic is indebted to Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), particularly her revision of Todorov (see pp. 26–37).
- 7 Hélène Cixous, 'The Character of "Character,"' trans. Keith Cohen, *New Literary History*, 5 (1974): 383–402 (389).
- 8 All quotations of Tarchetti's texts follow *I. U. Tarchetti: Tutte le opere*, ed. Enrico Ghidetti (Bologna: Cappelli, 1967), 2 vols. All translations of Italian writing are mine.
- 9 Raymond Williams has clarified this aspect of romanticism in *Culture and Society 1780–1950* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), chapter 2. My argument concerning Tarchetti's cultural politics implicitly takes issue with Carsaniga:

In their loathing for everything bourgeois, the *scapigliati* found it necessary to break with the Manzonian tradition and its ideological mystifications; on the other hand their antisocial instincts prevented

them from achieving an authentic realist art. . . . Tarchetti, who had been an acute observer and critic of the distorting disciplines of military life, took refuge in mysticism.

(‘Realism in Italy,’ p. 338)

Such comments tend to make the naive equation between realism and reality, failing to take into account the ideological determinations of literary form.

- 10 My figures and conclusions regarding de Kock's popularity in Italy are based on the *Catalogo generale della libreria italiana dall'anno 1847 a tutto il 1899*, ed. Attilio Pagliani (Rome: Associazione Tipografico-Libreria Italiana, 1900).
- 11 *The Geography of Strabo*, ed. and trans. Horace Leonard Jones (London: William Heinemann, and New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1930), vii: 233, 255 (16.1.26, 16.2.11).
- 12 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), p. 118. Said discusses the Orientalist idea ‘Europe-regenerated-by-Asia’ on pp. 113–16.
- 13 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 26.
- 14 Barbara Reynolds traces the development of Manzoni's linguistic theories in *The Linguistic Writings of Alessandro Manzoni: A Textual and Chronological Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1950).
- 15 The *Catalogo generale della libreria italiana* indicates that only two book-length translations of foreign fantastic narratives were available in Italy before Tarchetti began writing and publishing: Hoffmann, *Racconti* (Milan: n.p., 1855), 4 vols, and *Storie incredibili* (Milan: Daelli, 1863), which contained translations of Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* and Poe's ‘The Murders in the Rue Morgue’ and ‘The Oval Portrait.’ The Italian versions of Poe's texts were made from Baudelaire's French translations. Rossi sketches the Italian reception of Poe in ‘E. A. Poe e la Scapigliatura Lombarda,’ especially pp. 121–5.
- 16 For details concerning the publication of Shelley's tale, see Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Collected Tales and Stories*, ed. Charles E. Robinson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 390–91. For those concerning the publication of Tarchetti's text, see *Tutte le opere*, I: 66. Mariani describes Tarchetti's text as an adaptation of Balzac's ‘Elixir de longue vie’ (1830) and Horace Raissin's ‘L'elixir de jeunesse’ (1833) in *Storia della Scapigliatura*, pp. 399–401. Ghidetti notes that Tarchetti's text is ‘an “imitation” of an undiscoverable English original,’ but also cites the Balzac tale (*Tutte le opere*, I: 16). In *Teoria del fantastico e il racconto fantastico in Italia: Tarchetti, Pirandello, Buzzati* (Ravenna: Longo, 1982), Neuro Bonifazi calls Tarchetti's text his ‘first true and complete fantastic tale’ while rehearsing Mariani's list of sources (p. 85).
- 17 Carlo Dickens, *L'amico comune*, versione de I. U. Tarchetti (Milan: Sonzogno, 1869); J. F. Smith, *Fasi della vita o Uno sguardo dietro le scene*, versione de I. U. Tarchetti (Milan: Sonzogno, 1869). Both translations are noted by Ghidetti (*Tutte le opere*, I: 68) and listed in the *Catalogo generale*.
- 18 Salvatore Farina's memoir, ‘Iginio Ugo Tarchetti (1841–1869),’ appears in *La mia giornata: Care ombre* (Turin: Società Tipografico-Editrice Nazionale, 1913), pp. 20–43. Farina's text includes several letters from Tarchetti.
- 19 The low status of translation in nineteenth-century Italian publishing is discussed by Marino Berengo, *Intellettuali e librai nella Milano della Restaurazione* (Turin: Einaudi, 1980), pp. 340–6.
- 20 Benjamin Kaplan, *An Unhurried View of Copyright* (New York: Columbia



University Press, 1967), p. 29.

- 21 J. A. L. Sterling and M. C. L. Carpenter, *Copyright Law in the United Kingdom* (Sydney and London: Legal Books, 1986), p. 103. See also Augustine Birrell, *Seven Lectures on the Law and History of Copyright in Books* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), p. 154.
- 22 E. Piola-Caselli, *Trattato del Diritto di Autore*, 2nd ed. (Naples: Marghieri, 1927), pp. 22, 24, 26.
- 23 Martha Woodmansee, 'The Genius and the Copyright: Economic and Legal Conditions of the Emergence of the "Author"', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 14 (1984): 425-48.
- 24 Mariani, *Storia della Scapigliatura*, chapter 1.
- 25 In 'Construction of Character in Tarchetti's *Fosca*' (p. 79), Caesar notes that

the complexities of sexual identity were previously explored by Tarchetti in a fantastic tale called 'Uno spirito in un lampone.' It is an adaptation of Erckmann-Chatrian's story 'Un Bourgmestre en bouteille,' which sets out to illustrate the theory that one soul is capable of migrating into another body, be it animal or vegetable. Tarchetti makes one significant change to his source, so that his example of metempsychosis involves a female soul in a male body. The story then describes its protagonist's escape from a partial existence into an intermediate state, where he experiences male and female principles, before becoming fully androgynous.

- 26 All quotations of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* follow the edition of Miriam Brody (London: Penguin, 1975).
- 27 Shelley, *Collected Tales and Stories*, ed. Charles E. Robinson, p. 390.
- 28 I cite the text of the 1868 reprint which appears in Tarchetti, *Tutte le opere*, I: 114-33. Italicized words in the quotations indicate Tarchetti's additions to the English text.
- 29 Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (New York and London: Methuen, 1988), p. 217. Mellor's incisive full-scale treatment unfortunately omits any consideration of 'The Mortal Immortal.' The questionable class logic in Shelley's tale may derive from her assimilation of Mary Wollstonecraft's bourgeois feminism, in which class also occupies an uneasy position. See Cora Kaplan, 'Pandora's Box: Subjectivity, Class, and Sexuality in Socialist Feminist Criticism,' in *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, ed. Gayle Greene and Coppel Kahn (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), pp. 146-76: 'In *A Vindication*, working-class women are quite unselfconsciously constructed as prostitutes and dirty-minded servants corrupting bourgeois innocence. Turn the page over and you will also find them positioned in a more radical sense as the most brutalized victims of aristocratic and patriarchal despotism' (pp. 167-8).
- 30 For details concerning the publication of Sheridan's tale, I have relied on the *British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books*, the *National Union Catalogue*, David W. Meredith's entry on Sheridan in *A Dictionary of British and American Women Writers, 1660-1800*, ed. Janet Todd (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985), pp. 282-4, and Margaret Anne Doody, 'Frances Sheridan: Morality and Annihilated Time,' in *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*, ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986), pp. 324-58. I am particularly indebted to Julie Scott Meisami, Lecturer in Persian in the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Oxford University, for help in identifying

Shelley's allusion to Sheridan's tale. Quotations of *The History of Nourjahad* follow the text printed in Henry Weber, *Tales of the East: Comprising the Most Popular Romances of Oriental Origin; and the Best Imitations by European Authors: With New Translations, and Additional Tales, Never Before Published* (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne and Company, 1812), II: 695-721.

- 31 From its very first issue, *The Keepsake* published Eastern tales and poems with titles like 'Sadak the Wanderer. A Fragment,' 'The Persian Lovers,' and 'The Deev Alfakir': see *The Keepsake for MDCCCXXVIII*, ed. Frederic Mansel Reynolds (London: Hurst, Chance and Co., 1828), pp. 117-19, 136-7, 160-9.
- 32 See Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), chapter 8. Stone's research makes clear that the greater emphasis on companionship in marriage did not exclude male domination.
- 33 In 'Frances Sheridan: Morality and Annihilated Time' (pp. 353-4), Margaret Anne Doody similarly remarks that

*Nourjahad* is consistent in maintaining a masculine point of view, just as it is consistent - and respectful - in its use of Mohammedanism. The main characters are male (women have only a subordinate walk-on part to play in the narrative) and masculine views, ambitions, and sexuality are sympathetically treated. This marks a change from *Miss Sidney Bidulph* [Sheridan's two-part novel] in which female experience and views are paramount, though in both novels the male characters are led to discover the power and importance of heterosexual love which mingles friendship and affection with erotic desire . . . the eighteenth-century ideal.

Doody, however, does not see that this 'ideal' is linked to the 'masculine point of view' of the Oriental tale.

- 34 The anonymous prefatory poem to the first issue of *The Keepsake* represented its program as fundamentally patriarchal by characterizing its female audience as the aesthetic object of male devotion: 'because beauty is the soul of song, / We bring to thee (the beautiful), to thee, / The tributary lay of many a tongue.' The social composition of the audience for the giftbooks is described by Frederick W. Faxon, *Literary Annuals and Giftbooks. A Bibliography, 1823-1903. Reprinted with Supplementary Essays* (1912; rpt. Pinner, Middlesex: Private Libraries Association, 1973), p. xxi, and Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 362-3.
- 35 Susan Stewart, 'The Pickpocket: A Study in Tradition and Allusion,' *MLN*, 95 (1980): 1127-54 (1146, 1151).
- 36 Philip E. Lewis, 'The Measure of Translation Effects,' in *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph F. Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 31-62. The quotations from Lewis in the following sentences appear on p. 43.
- 37 These historical details rely on Denis Mack Smith, *Italy: A Modern History*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), chapter 6.
- 38 Folco Portinari discusses the ideological significance of the *scapigliato* collaboration with Milanese periodicals: see his chapter 'Milano,' in *Letteratura italiana, Storia e geografia, III*, ed. Alberto Asor Rosa (Turin:

Einaudi, 1989), especially pp. 232-40. Valerio Castronovo describes the political affiliations of various post-Unification periodicals in Castronovo, Luciana Giacheri Fossati, and Nicola Tranfaglia, *La stampa italiana nell'età liberale* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1979), pp. 5-68.

# INDEX

- Abrams, M. H. 60  
 Ali, Muhammad 140  
 American Literary Translators  
   Association 2, 67  
 Amos, Flora 61  
*Apostrophes* 131  
*The Arabian Nights* 129, 150-1, 204-5  
 Arenas, Reinaldo 79  
 Aristotle 75  
 Armand, Octavio 71
- Bakhtin, Mikhail 172-3  
 Balzac, Honoré de 81, 143  
 Baudelaire, Charles: 'L'Albatros' 193  
   n14; 'Correspondances' 181-4, 187,  
   191; *Les Fleurs du mal* 178, 181, 182;  
   'Le paysage' 178-81; 'Phares' 185-  
   7, 189, 190; 'De quelque coloristes'  
   182-3; *Tableaux parisiens* 42  
 Beckett, Samuel 144, 173  
 Bednarski, Betty 171-2  
 Belsey, Catherine 197-8  
 Benjamin, Andrew 16n18, 55n11  
 Benjamin, Walter: 'The Task of the  
   Translator' 6-7, 38, 42-7, 51-2, 87,  
   94, 193n12  
 Ben Jelloun, Tahar 152; *L'Enfant du  
   sable* 127, 128, 129, 131; *La Nuit  
   sacrée* 127, 128-31, 147  
 Berman, Antoine: *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*  
   172; 'La Traduction de la lettre'  
   161-2, 164  
 Berque, Jacques 158n24  
 Bhabha, Homi 118n7  
 Bible 62, 83, 204  
 Blake, William 103  
 Blake, William Hume 160, 170,  
   175n4;  
   *Brown Waters* 163-4; translation of  
   *Chez Nous* 168; translation of *Maria  
   Chapdelaine* 162-8  
 Blanchot, Maurice: *L'Arrêt de mort* 69;  
   'Translating' 13, 46  
 Bloom, Harold 68  
 Borges, Jorge Luis 79; 'Pierre  
   Menard, Author of the Quijote'  
   83  
 Boudjedra, Rachid 123, 152  
 Bourget, Paul 143  
 Breuer, Josef 27  
 Brisset, Jean Pierre 56n18  
 Brossard, Nicole 12; *Le Désert mauve*  
   173-4  
 Butor, Michel 195n24
- Cabrera Infante, Guillermo 75; *La  
   Habana para un infante difunto* 71, 76,  
   78, 83, 84; *Infante's Inferno*  
   76-9, 80-5; *Three Trapped Tigers* 75,  
   78, 81; *Tres tristes tigres* 75-7, 79,  
   81-3; *View of Dawn in the Tropics* 76  
 Camus, Albert 144  
 Carroll, Lewis 75, 79  
 Carsaniga, G. M. 226n9  
 Casanova, Giovanni Jacopo 78  
 Catlin, George 180-3, 185, 191  
 Cela, Camilo José 15n14  
 Césaire, Aimé 194-5n21  
 Chamisso, Adelbert von 206  
 Charles, Michel 161, 174n2  
 Chatrian, Louis-Alexandre, and  
   Émile Erckmann 197  
 Choinard, Ephrem 169-70  
 Cixous, Hélène 12, 80; 'Castration or  
   Decapitation?' 82, 115-16; 'The  
   Character of Character' 198; 'The

- Laugh of the Medusa' 12; and Catherine Clement: *The Newly Born Woman* 106-7, 108
- Clésinger, Jean Baptiste Auguste 180
- Cornell, Sarah, and Ann Liddle 107
- Corot, Jean Baptiste Camille 180
- Cowper, William 60
- Dante Alighieri 76, 89, 94, 103
- Debussy, Claude 78
- De Gaspé, Philippe Aubert 162, 164
- De Gaulle, Charles 149
- De Kock, Charles-Paul 203
- Delacroix, Eugène 185, 186
- Deleuze, Gilles: *The Logic of Sense* 48-9; preface to *Le Schizo et les langues* 51; and Félix Guattari: *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* 11, 53, 206
- De Man, Paul 6, 7, 42
- Derain, André 185
- Derrida, Jacques 6, 42; *The Ear of the Other* 70, 114; 'Living On Border Lines' 8-10, 11, 69; 'La mythologie blanche' 11-12; 'Des tours de Babel' 7, 8
- Descartes, René 36, 37
- des femmes 114
- Diaz-Diocaretz, Myriam 72
- Dickens, Charles 153, 208
- Divus, Andreas 45
- Djebar, Assia 152; *L'Amour, la fantasia* 124-7
- Doody, Margaret Anne 229n33
- Drant, Thomas 61-2, 67
- Drummond, William Henry 169-70
- Du Bartas, Guillaume de Sallust 182
- Dumas, Alexandre 143
- Eagleton, Terry 68
- Eayrs, Hugh 163
- Emporio pittoresco* 207, 209
- Erckmann, Émile, and Louis-Alexandre Chatrian 197
- Etiemble, René 187
- Farina, Salvatore 208-9
- Fayyad, Soleiman 153
- Felman, Shoshana 81
- Felstiner, John 85n3
- Fénelon, François de Salignac de la Mothe- 141
- Fernandez, Macedonia 80
- Ferron, Jacques 171
- Fleiss, Wilhelm 18, 19
- Foucault, Michel 11
- Frame, Donald 3
- France, Anatole 143
- Francklin, Thomas 59-60
- Fréchette, Louis 169
- Freud, Sigmund 89, 94; *An Autobiographical Study* 34-5; letters to Wilhelm Fleiss 18, 19, 21, 28, 33; 'A Project for a Scientific Psychology' 29, 30, 31; 'The Psychotherapy of Hysteria' 28; 'Screen Memories' 87; *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* 29; and Josef Breuer: 'On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: A Preliminary Communication' 25, 26
- Gagnon, Daniel 173
- Galland, Antoine 150
- Garaudy, Roger 146-7, 153
- García Márquez, Gabriel 79
- Gautier, Théophile 197
- Gavronsky, Serge 63-4
- George, Stefan 44
- Gerschenkron, Alexander 45
- Ghitany, Gamal 153, 154-5
- Glissant, Edmond 194-5n21
- Gobard, Henri 52-3
- Godard, Barbara 12
- Godbout, Jacques 171
- Graham, Joseph 42
- Grenier, Jean 151
- Guillot, Olga 84
- Hakim, Tawfiq Al- 151
- Hassan II 148
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel 76
- Heidegger, Martin 23, 40n13
- Hémon, Louis 162, 166, 168
- Hoffmann, E. T. A. 197, 206
- Hölderlin, Friedrich 44, 47, 49, 54
- Homer 45, 60; *The Iliad* 204
- Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus) 61-2
- Huet, Paul 180
- Hugo, Victor 103, 143, 185
- Humphries, Rolfe 67
- Husayn, Taha 142, 151
- Ibrahim, Sonallah 153
- Ionesco, Eugene 144

# INDEX

- Isma'il, Khedive of Egypt 141
- Jadin, Louis Godefroy 180
- Joachim, Joseph 57
- Jodelle, Etienne 189
- Joyce, James 75, 169, 173
- Jung, Carl 89
- Jussawalla, Adil 118n7
- Kafka, Franz 53  
*The Keepsake* 207, 220, 222, 223,  
 229n31, 229n34
- Kenner, Hugh 45
- Khatibi, Abdelkebir 122, 152; *Amour  
 bilingue* 133-7; *Maghreb pluriel*  
 132-3; *La Mémoire tatouée* 122-3,  
 131-2
- Kierkegaard, Soren 36
- Kilito, Abdelfatah 123
- Kittang, Atle 194n18
- Klein, Abraham Moses 168-9; *The  
 Second Scroll* 169
- Koran 121, 126, 128, 145, 222
- Kristeva, Julia 80
- Lacan, Jacques 80
- Laplanche, Jean: *Life and Death in  
 Psychoanalysis* 32; *New  
 Foundations for Psychoanalysis* 28,  
 31; 'Spécificité des problèmes  
 terminologiques dans la traduction  
 de Freud' 20; and Jean-Baptiste  
 Pontalis: *Fantasme originaire,  
 Fantômes des origines, Origines du  
 fantasme* 25-6, 29; *Vocabulaire de la  
 psychanalyse* 36
- Laurens, André 158n24
- Leblanc, Maurice 143
- Lezama Lima, José 77, 80
- Levine, Suzanne Jill 71-2
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude 65, 88
- Lévy-Beaulieu, Victor 171
- Lewis, Philip E. 12, 107, 224, 225
- Liddle, Ann, and Sarah Cornell 107
- Lispector, Clarice 80, 108, 114, 117,  
 118-19n10; *La Passion selon G. H.*  
 106, 107
- Loeb Classical Library 67
- Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth 182
- Lord Tweedsmuir (John Buchan)  
 163-4
- Love's Labours Lost* (William  
 Shakespeare) 77
- Lucretius (Titus Lucretius Carus) 184
- Luther, Martin 44
- Maalouf, Amin 147
- Macphail, Andrew 165, 167, 175n4
- Madrasat al-Alsun 141
- Mahfouz, Naguib 15n14, 150, 152, 153
- Mahmoody, Betty 148
- Maier, Carol 71-2
- Mallarmé, Stéphane 44, 45, 101,  
 193n13; 'Don du poème' 103
- Mandelbaum, Allen 89, 92
- Manfaluti, Mustafa Al- 142
- Mannoni, Octave 194n18
- Manzoni, Alessandro 204, 211; *I  
 promessi sposi* 196, 202-3, 206
- Marcus, James 2
- Marx, Julius 75
- Masson, Jeffrey M. 20
- Maurois, André 143
- Meddeb, Abdelwahab 123-4
- Mellor, Anne K. 218
- Merrill, James: *The Changing Light  
 at Sandover* 88, 97, 102; *Divine  
 Comedies* 88; 'Losing the Marbles'  
 101; 'Lost in Translation' 87, 89,  
 90, 94, 102, 103; 'Paul Valéry:  
 Palme' 90-4; *Recitative* 86; 'A  
 Room at the Heart of Things' 94;  
 'Santorini: Stopping the Leak' 94,  
 97-103; *Scripts for the Pageant* 103
- Meyer, C. F. 21, 33
- Mezei, Kathy 172
- Millet, Jean François 180
- Miquel, André 150, 157n15
- Mohamed 128
- Le Monde* 127
- Montaigne, Michel de 195n22
- My Secret Life* 78
- Nabokov, Vladimir 45, 173
- Nasser, Gamel Abdel 144
- Nerval, Gérard de 197
- Nietzsche, Friedrich 36, 48, 61
- Nobel Prize 15n14, 152, 153
- Our Man in Havana* 76
- Pannwitz, Rudolf 44, 46, 47
- Pater, Walter 78
- PEN American Center 67
- Perrault, Gilles 148
- Pichois, Claude 185

- Pindar 47  
 Plato 48  
 Poe, Edgar Allan 182, 197, 206  
 Poggioli, Renato 84  
 Ponson du Terrail, Pierre Alexis,  
     Vicomte de 143  
 Pound, Ezra 45  
 Poussin, Nicolas 181, 186  
 Prix Goncourt 127, 128, 147, 152  
 Proust, Marcel 76, 103  
 Puget, Pierre 186, 187  
 Puig, Manuel 79; *Betrayed by Rita*  
     *Hayworth* 81  
 Pushkin, Aleksandr Sergeyevich 45
- Quaïd, Youssef Al 153
- Rabassa, Gregory 3-4  
 Racine, Jean 142, 174n2  
 Ravel, Maurice 78, 83, 84  
 Renaud, Jacques 171  
 Rich, Adrienne 72  
 Rilke, Rainer Maria 88, 89, 91, 101  
 Rimbaud, Arthur 97, 178; 'Bateau  
     ivre' 191; 'Voyelles' 187-91  
 Rivard, Adjutor 168  
*Rivista minima* 198, 207  
 Roberts, Sir Charles G. D. 160;  
     translation of *Les Anciens*  
     *canadiens* 162-5, 167  
 Robinson, Charles E. 212  
 Rodríguez Monegal, Emir 81  
 Romano, Sergio 6  
 Ronsard, Pierre de 189  
 Roscommon, Wentworth Dillon, Earl  
     of 58-9, 60, 63  
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 205  
 Rousseau, Théodore 180  
 Roustang, François 20-1  
 Rubens, Peter Paul 186
- Sadat, Anwar El- 144, 150  
 Said, Edward 148, 205  
 St.-Aubyn, F. C. 187  
 Sarduy, Severo 77, 79, 80; *Maitreya* 79,  
     82  
 Sartre, Jean-Paul 144  
 Satie, Erik 77, 78  
 Sayyab, Badr Chaker Al- 150  
 Schleiermacher, Friedrich 60  
 Schumann, Clara 57, 72  
 Schumann, Robert 57  
 Scott, David 177
- Scott, Sir Walter 167  
 Sebillet, Thomas 192n9  
 Seifert, Jaroslav 15n14  
 Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft 207, 208,  
     218; 'The Mortal Immortal' 207,  
     211-14, 217-23  
 Shelley, Percy Bysshe 69  
 Sheridan, Frances 220; *The History of*  
     *Nourjahad* 220-3  
 Simon, Claude 15n14  
 Sindbad 152  
*Il sole* 208  
 Sophocles 47, 49, 54, 94, 142  
*Souffles* 131  
 Sponde, Jean de 182  
 Stanton, Domna 80  
 Steegmuller, Francis 75-6  
 Stein, Gertrude 80  
 Steiner, George 46, 64-6, 120-1  
 Sterne, Laurence 80  
 Stewart, Susan 223  
 Stowe, Harriet Beecher 209  
 Strabo 205  
 Strachey, James 20
- Tabourot, Estienne 193n13  
 Tahtawi, Rifa Al- 141  
 Tarchetti, Iginio Ugo 196-7, 207-9;  
     'L'elixir dell'immortalità  
     (imitazione dall'inglese)' 207, 214-  
     23; 'La fortuna di capitano Gubart'  
     198; *Fosca* 196-7; 'Idee minime sul  
     romanzo' 198; 'Il mortale  
     immortale (dall'inglese)' 207; *Una*  
     *nobile follia* 196, 208; *Paolina* 196,  
     211; *Racconti fantastici* 197  
 Thibaudet, Albert 177  
 Todorov, Tzvetan 198  
 Tomiche, Nada 150, 151, 152  
 Toubia, Maguid 153  
 Troyon, Constant 180
- Valéry, Paul: 'L'Abeille' 95; *Cahiers*  
     96; 'Le Cimetière marin' 94-103;  
     'Les Grenades' 95; 'La jeune  
     Parque' 95, 98; 'Palme' 88, 89-95;  
     'Le Vin perdu' 95  
 Vargas Llosa, Mario 79  
 Verne, Jules 143  
 Voltaire 142  
 Voss, Johann Heinrich 44
- Walton, Isaak 164

## INDEX

- Weaver, William 4, 14n9  
Weber, Karl Maria von 185  
Wolfson, Louis 49-52, 54  
Wollstonecraft, Mary 222, 228n29; *A  
Vindication of the Rights of  
Woman* 212-14, 217  
*Woman in the Muslim Unconscious*  
130
- Woodmansee, Martha 210  
Yacine, Kateb 123  
Yeats, William Butler 103  
Zakariya, Fouad 152-3  
Zeno 96-7, 101  
Zola, Émile 153